DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 478 720 RC 023 374

AUTHOR	Irby, Merita, Ed.
TITLE	Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development. Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 5.
INSTITUTION	Forum for Youth Investment, Takoma Park, MD.
SPONS AGENCY	Ford Foundation, New York, NY.
ISBN	ISBN-1-931902-05-4
PUB DATE	2001-09-00
NOTE	129p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http//www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/cydserieslessons.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Books (010) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Access to Education; *Change Agents; Childrens Rights; *Community Development; *Community Programs; Disadvantaged Youth; Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Indigenous Populations; Intergenerational Programs; Leadership Training; Program Descriptions; Rural Youth; *Social Responsibility; Urban Youth; *Youth Leaders; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Latin America; Social Justice; *Youth Community Service

ABSTRACT

The International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development (ILG) was formed to examine the convergence of youth development and community development. In 1999, ILG commissioned a set of papers from young people involved in national efforts to engage youth in the political processes of their countries and brought ILG members together for a week to learn from programs and leaders in five Latin American partners--Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay, and Paraguay. After 3 days of site visits in the five countries, ILG members and their host teams attended a conference to share lessons learned from the site visits and to share experiences from ILG members' own work. Section 1 provides an overview of the centrality of young people's participation to the health and development of communities and discusses links between youth development and community development. Section 2 presents essays by young people and program descriptions. In a neighborhood above Caracas, Venezuela, young people are the leaders in creating educational opportunities for children and youth. In Oaxaca, Mexico, teenagers and young adults are replenishing stocks of quail that had been part of the traditional livelihood of their Indigenous community. In Ecuador, young people of Cefocine helped rebuild a community ravaged by floods. In Paraguay, young activists halted a threat to democracy in their country. In Uruguay, young people are struggling to find input into broader community change. Section 3 presents lessons learned by ILG members during the Latin American experience and its impact on their youth engagement projects. An appendix presents information about ILG members. (TD)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 478 720

COMMUNITY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Series

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared

Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development

Edited by Merita Irby

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Merita Irby

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

THE FORUM FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

WITH THE SUPPORT OF
THE FORD FOUNDATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RC023374

Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared

Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development

Edited by Merita Irby

THE COMMUNITY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT SERIES, VOLUME 5
PUBLISHED WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE FORD FOUNDATION

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the forum
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

Helping organizations that invest in **youth**, invest in **change**

The Forum for Youth Investment was created to increase the quality and quantity of youth investments and youth involvement by promoting a "big picture" approach to planning, research, advocacy and policy development among the broad range of national organizations that help constituents and communities invest in children, youth and families. To do this, the Forum commits itself to building connections, increasing capacity and tackling persistent challenges across the allied youth fields.

The Forum offers its members tools, intelligence, training, international perspectives and individual supports. It creates opportunities for youth investors to come together in neutral forums to tackle persistent challenges such as shaping public perceptions of young people and strengthening the links between preventing youth problems and promoting youth preparation and development. It helps identify, facilitate and broker relationships among members, offering them new lenses for looking at old issues, supports to turn the ideas into action and vehicles to reflect on lessons learned. It works to ensure that the information, tools and insights generated by the Forum and its members are shaped by and useful to local communities and practitioners. It asks members to contribute commentary, products and time toward the creation of a shared information base. All this work is done in full partnership with Forum members, with the aim of increasing collective learning and action on "big picture" issues — issues that cross traditional sectors and lines, and which are beyond the capacity of any organization to tackle alone.

The Forum for Youth Investment is a U.S. initiative of the International Youth Foundation™

About the Ford Foundation's Community Youth Development Initiative

Using the positive youth development framework and guiding principles, the Human Development and Reproductive Health unit of the Ford Foundation launched the Community Youth Development Initiative. The term "community youth development" is used to define the process of young people and adults working in partnership to create the necessary conditions that will result in the successful development of young people, their peers, families and communities — the integration of youth development and community development. The Forum's work with the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development is one of several projects funded by the Ford Foundation as part of its Community Youth Development Initiative.

The initiative's goal is to enhance the ability of young people from economically disadvantaged communities to successfully transition from adolescence into responsible adulthood, economic self-sufficiency and engaged citizenship by building the capacity of low-income communities to create supportive environments.

Printed in the U.S.A. • September 2001

ISBN No. 1-931902-05-4 (Volume 5)

SUGGESTED CITATION: Irby, M. (Ed.). (2001). *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development.* Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 5. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.

© 2001 by the International Youth Foundation (IYF), 32 South Street, Suite 500, Baltimore, Maryland 21202 USA. T: +1.410.347.1500, F: +1.410.347.1188. All rights reserved. Parts of this report may be quoted or used as long as the authors, the Forum for Youth Investment and IYF are duly recognized. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial purpose without prior permission.

Please contact the Forum for Youth Investment at 7014 Westmoreland Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland 20912, T: 301.270.6250, F: 301.270.7144, www.forumforyouthinvestment.org, for information about reprinting this publication and information about other publications.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments v

Introduction 1

Section I: International Insights on Youth and Communities 7

Section II. Common Themes and Contrasting Contexts:
Reflections on the Latin American Experience 21

Reflections from Venezuela 31

The Venezuelan Context, Victoria Bigio, Opportunitas, Venezuela 31

South American Spirit, Tim Burke, National Youth Agency,
United Kingdom 34

We Can Raise Our Minds Up, Glenda Lopez, Utopía, Venezuela 38

Reflections from Ecuador 44

Cefocine: Communicating Hope, Sabrina Duque, Cefocine, Ecuador 45

Paving Pathways: Youth Development Through the Arts, Jenny Nicholls, ... 55

Reflections from Mexico 59

Income Generation in Context: The Story of COVORPA,
Led by Efraín Aragón Ibáñez 60

Learning Exchange: Income Generation Projects Around the World,
Led by Ario Higareda Pacheco, Gregg Taylor and Rubén Valencia 67

Themes from the Oaxacan Site Visit, ILG Team Members 71

Reflections from Uruguay 77

Youth Participation in Uruguay: Creating Space during a Period of Apathy,
Uruguayan Youth, Foro Juvenil Staff and ILG Team Members 77

Reflections from Paraguay 85

Youth Participation in Paraguay: In Defense of Democracy,
ILG Team Members and Guests 85

Vision Statement: Youth Participation: Why, Who, What, When,
Where and How, ILG Ecuador Team 95

Section III: Lessons Learned from the ILG Experiment 103

Appendix: Members of the International Learning Group on
Youth and Community Development 109

References 125

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Lessons Learned/Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development is truly the result of many hands and minds. First among these are, of course, the members of the International Learning Group (ILG). Brought together for virtual and in-person learning exchanges in 1999 and 2000, this diverse group of leaders demonstrated true passion for the range of issues surrounding youth involvement in their communities, strong commitment to learn and stretch each other's thinking, and real tolerance for an evolving process that was clearly an experiment in how to engage an interdisciplinary, cross-sector, international group in joint learning. The more than twenty individuals that were a part of the group — half from the U.S., half from other countries around the globe — are described in more detail in the Appendix. We thank each and every one of them for their contributions over the course of the ILG experience. We are especially grateful to the individual contributors whose reflections are captured in this volume.

We would like to extend our deep gratitude to Inca Mohamed and the Ford Foundation for their commitment to the Forum's work to connect the youth and community development fields. We know that this project stretched the boundaries of their work. This support, however, has been critical to the Forum's organizational development, as well as to the conceptual development reflected in this and other publications. Thanks also to the advisors that helped to conceptualize the learning group at its inception — Michele Cahill, Ron Register and Gary Walker.

As is evident in reviewing the contents of this publication, the richest learning experience of the ILG process — the concurrent traveling seminars and regional conference in Latin America — would not have been possible without the gracious hospitality of several members of the International Youth Foundation's Global Partner Network. To our friends and colleagues at Opportúnitas (Venezuela), Fundación Esquel (Ecuador), Foro Juvenil (Uruguay), Centro de Información y Recursos para el Desarrollo — CIRD (Paraguay), Fundación Comunitaria de Oaxaca and Milpas de Oaxaca (Oaxaca, Mexico), we extend on behalf of all of the ILG members our warmest thanks for the inspiration and memories.

We would also like to thank the many Forum staff and consultants who have been instrumental over the past several years in facilitating the work of the ILG and in developing this publication. Thad Ferber, Georgette Offer, former staff Steve Mokwena and Melissa Mullins, and consultant Maria Candamil were all centrally involved in facilitating and documenting

the ILG's traveling seminar in Latin America. Joel Tolman, Tara Marshall, Carole McGeehan and communications consultant Trooper Sanders are key members of the Forum team that have been instrumental in bringing this publication about.

Special thanks go to Jules Dunham, former staff member and coordinator for the ILG throughout the majority of the project — from the nomination process through the Latin American meeting and into the documentation phase of the work. Her commitment rivals that of the ILG members themselves when it comes to ensuring that young people have valid and recognized roles in shaping the direction of their communities and societies.

INTRODUCTION

We watched young people between the ages of maybe 15 and 25 going into these small, isolated, very poor communities and teaching new skills . . . to the young mothers . . . basic skills [used] in making simple craft products that they could then sell at the markets. These groups of women were starting to create small business opportunities for themselves . . . . This was quite revolutionary and quite innovative . . . the idea that the way into communities is not necessarily with professionals but with young people.

In other communities we saw in Ecuador, again it was young people, 14–20, who would go in and start working with the children in the community — playing games, doing activities that would build confidence and communication skills, cooperation . . . and again it was the mothers who would come down to watch and take an interest in what was happening with their children. And then when they thought they could trust these new people, that's when the teenagers would start passing on these new skills. And I haven't really seen anything like that . . . certainly not in Australia. I've hardly seen that documented anywhere in the world."

— Jenny Nicholls, Australia

Early in 1999, more than 20 leaders, activists and researchers in youth and community development from 10 countries agreed to take part in a cross-national learning experience funded by the Ford Foundation. The aim: To better understand how young people and adults working together can make significant changes in their own lives and in the lives of their communities and societies. Because one of the primary goals was to bring international perspectives into U.S. discussions and strategies, half of the group was composed of leaders in youth development or community development in the United States.[1] The other half was nominated by international offices of the Ford Foundation or country partners of the International Youth Foundation (IYF). This International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development was facilitated by the Forum for Youth Investment (formerly known as IYF-US).

[1] A majority of the U.S. members of the group were grantees of the Ford Foundation's Community Youth Development Initiative. Given the focus on connecting youth development to community development, remaining U.S. members of the group were leaders in major community development intermediaries such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Coalition for Community Change, the Enterprise Foundation and the National Community-Building Network.

> *The ILG is a practitioner-driven vehicle aimed at infusing practical and relevant information to inform practice.*
> — Inca Mohamed, Ford Foundation Program Officer, speaking to the group in Caracas

In November of 1999, the International Learning Group (ILG) members came together in Latin America for what one participant described as "one of the most significant professional (and personal) experiences of my life." Beginning in small groups that made concurrent site visits in five countries and concluding with a regional conference focused on cross-site and cross-national learning, the traveling seminar was by all accounts an incredible learning experience for those involved — ILG members, IYF country partners, local program leaders, Forum and Ford Foundation staff and invited guests. Even the translators were moved, donating their time in the evening in order to keep the conversation going and be a part of the experience.

The ILG's Latin American trip inspired most of the ideas and reflections included in this publication. It was, without a doubt, the defining experience of the 18-month ILG process. But it was not the only experience.

Envisioned as a highly interactive virtual learning community enabled by advances in communications technology, the ILG aimed to support sustained individual and collective learning. Members participated in an online learning community, sharing information on a virtual Web platform designed to support collaboration. They conducted small learning projects in their own countries, aimed largely at convening local stakeholders, further developing new learnings and sharing the ideas and experiences of the ILG. They frequently contributed to *International Insights*, the quarterly report developed as a part of this project and disseminated through the *CYD Journal*.

Similarly, the International Learning Group, while the defining focus of the Forum's work, was not the only focus. Multi-year funding from the Ford Foundation gave us an unprecedented opportunity to learn from and with a broad range of individuals and organizations committed to helping young people assume broader and deeper roles in their communities. Unlike most of the other Community Youth Development Initiative grantees,[2] the Forum does not have direct links to programs and practitioners. Our role has been to research, document, synthesize and share. In a field as young as this one, that means that our time was spent in the field, not in the library. The Forum has convened small groups; interviewed national leaders and local practitioners; assisted key national organizations by co-hosting meetings, developing background papers, and reviewing plans; synthesized a range of divergent information and ideas; and contributed to or created

[2] The Community Youth Development Initiative is an effort of the Human Development and Reproductive Health unit of the Ford Foundation. It aims to enhance the ability of young people from economically disadvantaged communities to successfully transition from adolescence into responsible adulthood, economic self-sufficiency and engaged citizenship by building the capacity of low-income communities to create supportive environments.

THE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING GROUP ON YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Vision.** Communities where adults and young people have opportunities and resources to work together to create thriving communities.
- **Goal.** To increase the supports, opportunities and expectations for young people and adults to work in partnership to create the necessary conditions for the successful development of themselves, their peers, their neighbors and their communities.
- **Mission.** To coordinate structured opportunities for engaged doers and thinkers to create, share, critique and apply research, theory, policies and practices that promote the goal of engagement in community development. And to create an expanding network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting young people as change agents.

several publication series. A full listing of the papers and publications that have grown out of this project can be found in *Youth Development and Community Change: A Guide to Documents and Tools Developed Through the Forum's Ford Foundation-Funded Projects 1997–2001* (The Forum for Youth Investment, 2001).

This volume pulls together a range of reflections from ILG members, Latin American friends and staff. The bulk of the volume is devoted to the individual and collective essays, interviews, statements and reports written or inspired by the ILG members during and after the Latin American visit. The reflections are grouped by country and accompanied by brief contextual pieces describing the country, the IYF partner host and the ILG team. These have been edited for length in some cases, but we have made no attempt to make them uniform chapters in a book. Each stands on its own as a testimony to the depth and openness of both the ILG members and the young people and adults who shared their stories. The collection includes reflections from a broad range of sources.

- Remarks and essays by several young leaders, including:
  - comments that Glenda Lopez made to the plenary session of the ILG regional meeting focusing on her work as a young leader of Utopía, an innovative educational program run by young people in the La Vega neighborhood of Caracas;
  - a presentation by and discussion with Efraín Aragón Ibáñez, a young Oaxacan leader involved in developing sustainable income generation projects, such as quail farming, that build on indigenous traditions; and
  - field reports by Sabrina Duque, a young reporter with *El Commercio* in Ecuador, capturing the essence of the ILG country site visits.
- Reflection pieces polished and published in Great Britain and Australia, including:
  - "South American Spirit," by Tim Burke, one of the premier reporters from the United King-

dom's National Youth Agency's *Young People Now* who joined us as a reporter for the entire trip. Burke highlights the experiences of the Venezuelan team, focusing on the visit to Utopía; and

- "Paving Pathways: Youth Development through the Arts — A South American Perspective," by Jenny Nicholls, reflecting on the powerful ways she saw the arts used in some of Ecuador's programs, published in *Lowdown — Youth Performing Arts Journal of Australia.*

- Three jointly written pieces crafted by the country teams during the Latin American meeting, including:
  - a synthesis of the Paraguay team's interviews with young people concerning their role in community and social change, especially in the context of "El Marzo de Paraguay," the challenge to democracy that resulted in the death of eight and injury of hundreds of young demonstrators eight months prior to the ILG's visit;
  - excerpts from interviews with the leaders of Foro Juvenil, one of the oldest and most established youth programs in Uruguay, and from young people involved in Foro's programs in Montevideo's depressed neighborhoods; and
  - a vision statement written by ILG members and their hosts from Ecuador about how young people *should be* involved and valued in communities — a vision that echoes the insights and intent of all who participated in the visits.

These pieces are preceded by an introductory essay that reflects on the recurring themes raised by ILG members during the visits.

In addition to these reflections on the Latin American visit, this volume contains two other sets of reflections. This volume begins with a discussion of the issues and ideas with which the learning group struggled — ideas about youth participation, youth development and community development. It concludes with a discussion of some of the broader lessons learned about the challenges of creating learning groups and exploring broad topics. (The ILG was, without a doubt, the most challenging and demanding project we have undertaken as a staff.) These reflections written by Forum staff are complemented by brief snapshots of each of the ILG members, highlighting how the themes and lessons explored by the ILG have linked to and/or contributed to their own learning and work. (See Appendix. For space reasons, international members' profiles are given fuller treatment than U.S. members. Most of the U.S. ILG members and their organizations are well known and easily researched on the Web.)

There is really no way to capture the richness of the lessons learned and shared over the course of this project. We hope that this collection of pieces speaks to the power of the learning, sharing and relationship building that transpired. There is no doubt that many things could have been done better, sooner, or differently. But there is also no doubt that the experiences had an impact on all involved. And while this was clearly not the primary intent, we expect that one of the most

powerful impacts the project had was on the Forum's own thinking.

We have come to have a much deeper appreciation of the importance of a set of basic but powerful questions posed repeatedly by Inca Mohamed, the Ford Foundation Program Officer who oversaw the Foundation's work in this area:

What does it take to get basic institutions to support and encourage young people — especially marginalized young people — to make fundamental changes in their communities? Can we find powerful examples? Can we identify the powerful barriers? Can we make progress?

We hope, in this volume and the others that make up the Community & Youth Development and the *International Insights* publication series, that we have been able to offer some of the answers we have heard and gleaned over the course of the project.

SECTION I

INTERNATIONAL INSIGHTS ON YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES

Key Lessons from ILG Dialogues on the Centrality of Young People to the Health and Development of All Communities

The idea that all young people can and should work in partnership with adults to improve conditions where they live has gained much currency over the past few years. Yet as with all compelling ideas, for it to move forward it must be grounded on sound knowledge that can shape and support action.

In international circles, enormous variation is evident in how the terms "youth," "community" and "development" are understood and used. And complex ideas such as youth development, youth participation, community development, community youth development, social responsibility, civic engagement and even youth adult partnership are anything but straightforward. Defining terms and concepts is one of the most arduous but important tasks required when convening any group. This certainly proved to be the case with the international and interdisciplinary group of practitioners, advocates and researchers brought together by the ILG project. The results, however, were well worth the effort. The process netted rich discussions about language, goals and premises. It also generated a learning agenda that has guided the work of the Forum and, we hope, will be useful in guiding the ongoing work of the Forum, individual ILG members and practitioners, researchers and advocates worldwide.[3]

[3] Forum staff kicked off the process by drafting and circulating a discussion paper that contained both language and graphics representing some of the key premises to be debated. The revised paper, *Pathways for Youth and Community Development*, prepared as an annotated slide presentation, can be found on the Forum's Web site, www.forumforyouthinvestment.org. Feedback on this paper led to the development of "Youth Participation: 10 Basic Premises" (page 9). Following the ILG's visit to Latin America, the group also worked to develop and respond to a learning agenda that was laid out in Spring 2000 in the first volume of *International Insights*, the ILG Bulletin that appears quarterly in *CYD Journal*. Subsequent issues of *International Insights* explored three components of the learning agenda: expectations, strategies and evidence. Themes explored in the discussion paper, member commentary and learning agenda are highlighted and excerpted throughout this section.

FRAMING THE DISCUSSION

What Are the Premises?

Youth, participation, community, development — important words, each loaded with meanings. Much of the initial work of ILG members focused on sharing definitions, surfacing tensions and reframing the discussion in order to account for fundamentally different ways of understanding these words. Forum staff drafted a discussion paper to start the process of working with ILG advisors and members. Members referred to and discussed the language, concepts and graphics of the paper throughout the process. Four members, Barry Cullen from Ireland, Pedro Bellen and Marilyn de Castro from the Philippines, and Della Hughes from the United States, provided detailed written comments which included recommendations for new language, new ideas and new graphics.

In the end, multiple discussions and diagrams were boiled down to ten basic premises that reflected the views of most, if not all, of the ILG members. These were shared and discussed by members, but there was no formal ratification process. We cannot, therefore, state that this is the official language of the ILG. But we are comfortable that these premises reflect the range of discussions. More importantly, we are confident that they reflect much more of the ILG's wisdom than ours. Only five of the ten premises were represented in the original discussion paper, and all of those that were represented were modified.

The ten premises, outlined in more detail in the sidebar that follows, are:

1. Community supports are integral to young people's development;
2. Youth participation is integral to young people's development;
3. Youth participation is integral to community well-being and social change;
4. Community well-being is not synonymous with community development;
5. Youth participation is more than community service;
6. Youth participation requires preparation;
7. Youth participation requires space;
8. Youth participation requires protection;
9. Youth participation requires connections; and
10. Youth participation is a basic right and obligation.

The first three premises reflect members' deep commitment to a shared vision: Young people and adults working together to improve themselves, their families, their communities and their countries. There was a strong consensus that, while the focus of the ILG was on young people as change agents in their communities, the premises needed to reinforce: (1) the inextricable two-way dynamic that exists between youth and communities; and (2) the independent importance of investing in youth development as a goal and as a field of practice.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION: 10 BASIC PREMISES

1. Community Supports Are Integral to Young People's Development

Young people grow up with adults in communities. The more assets a community has to support its members and the more those assets are directed toward the support of young people and their families, the more likely it is that young people will develop the skills, knowledge and values they need to function productively as young people and as adults.

2. Youth Participation Is Integral to Young People's Development

Young people and their families need the basic services, supports and opportunities that communities provide through housing, jobs, health care, business, cultural and spiritual growth by participating as recipients, as volunteers, as planners, as implementers, as decision makers, as trustees and as advocates. The more young people are able and prepared to engage with adults in the work of improving the well-being of themselves, their families and their communities, the faster their growth.

3. Youth Participation Is Integral to Community Well-Being and Social Change

The full and meaningful participation of young people in the social, economic, cultural and civic lives of their families, schools, communities and societies is critical to their growth and well-being and to the growth and health of these institutions.

4. Community Well-Being Is Not Synonymous with Community Development

Community development — leveraging public and private dollars to improve the quality and quantity of housing and businesses in their communities — is not the only goal. Community building is a broader approach that assumes that social and human capital development is equally if not more important than physical and economic development. Community change encompasses broad or targeted approaches that include community development and community building, as well as advocacy and community organizing. Community preservation recognizes the good things in the community (cultural practices, entrepreneurship, open space) and works to preserve them.

5. Youth Participation Is More than Community Service

Participation includes opportunities to improve community and society through service, through "giving back." But in its broadest sense, the right to participation also includes the rights *to have access* to education, work, civic representation and opportunities to contribute; *to make personal choices* about these opportunities; and *to influence*, to wield power. Young people who have been denied access, choice and influence are unlikely to respond to vague calls to "give to others." But they do respond to and initiate opportunities to improve the lives of those whom they touch.

continues . . .

YOUTH PARTICIPATION: 10 BASIC PREMISES, *continued*

6. Youth Participation Requires Preparation

Young people need knowledge, skills and perspectives. Participation in civil society is difficult if one has not been a full participant in the education system and if one is not on a path toward becoming a full participant in the labor force. For young people, learning, work and civic and community engagement have to be seen as equally important forms of participation. Full participation is enhanced when these three avenues for preparation and participation are linked together, when each is seen as relevant for the other.

7. Youth Participation Requires Space

Young people have to see that they have real opportunities to learn, work and be involved in community and civic affairs. Young people participate more fully when they believe that there is some room for them to not only join in as students, workers, volunteers and voters, but also to contribute ideas and influence decisions. The concept of space — room to act — is important.

8. Youth Participation Requires Protection

Young people have to feel safe, secure and supported in order to participate in even the most basic services and functions such as health care, shelter or education. Full participation requires that young people feel confident that their rights will be protected regardless of the personal decisions they make or the public positions they take.

9. Youth Participation Requires Connections

Young people have to feel confident, competent and connected enough to use the opportunities available. Young people participate more fully when they believe that these opportunities are so critical to the execution of their responsibilities as citizens in their countries that they are willing to work with, and if necessary against, adults to create them.

10. Youth Participation Is a Basic Right and an Obligation

Every young person should have access to pathways for participation in the social, civic and economic life of their community and their society. Every young person should be expected to use those pathways to find ways to build skills and contribute to family, community and society by participating in educational, economic and civic life.

Source: Developed as a result of feedback from ILG members. Over the course of the project, ILG members were engaged in a series of exercises and discussions that allowed them to describe the goals and premises of their work in their own words. These do not represent a formal agreement of the ILG members. They do, however, indicate the range of the discussions in which the ILG took part and represent the collective struggle of ILG members to come to grips with difficult issues.

This consensus was born out of seemingly large differences in opinion between members entering the discussion of the intersection of youth and community from different vantage points. What was common in their concerns was a strong desire to balance this complex set of goals. Members had a need to distinguish between the convergence of goals (e.g., the development of youth, adults and communities) and the convergence of fields (e.g., the youth development and the community development fields). They also had a need to scrutinize language. These comments, for example, were written about the same discussion paper slide and text (see Figure 1):

I personally believe that the real challenge is to initiate a paradigm shift whereby every single community development effort is youth development and every youth development effort is community development. We have to consider that community development and youth development are, in essence, inseparable. Hence, the challenge is how to make a perfect circle out of the interfacing, so that the difference is almost unnoticeable (see Figure 2).

— Pedro Bellen, The Philippines

While the exploration of common ground between youth development and community development is necessary, and clearly contributes to both, I believe we should remain mindful that these are separate processes.... In order to effectively integrate youth development and community development, we need to have a clearer picture of each; we need to be sure of the concepts, ideas and methodologies that give direction to both as well as be able to identify the points at which they separate.

— Barry Cullen, Ireland

FIGURE 1

THE CHALLENGE: EXPLORING COMMON GROUND

Communities are dependent upon the minds, hearts and hands of their young people and youth are dependent upon the viability, vitality, protection and attention of their community. These would seem to be common sense statements, but in many countries, in particular in the United States, this vital interdependence of youth development and community development is too often ignored . . . .

Source: *Pathways for Youth and Community Development: A Discussion Paper of the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development* (The Forum for Youth Investment, 1998).

FIGURE 2

THE CHALLENGE: AN ALTERNATE PERSPECTIVE

Why can't young people be 'dependent upon the minds, hearts and hands' of communities, and communities on the 'vitality, viability, protection and attention' of young people?

— Della Hughes,

17 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CHILDREN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Outside of the United States, much of the work focused on youth participation, youth development and community development starts from a human rights' perspective. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) reaffirms that youth participation is a fundamental right, inextricably connected with other basic rights and with young people's development. Some of the central premises of the CRC:

1. The CRC recognizes that children have rights and dignity as individual human beings, not only for **protection** and **provision**, but also for **participation** in their societies (the "3 Ps").
2. The CRC establishes goals and standards for individual nations to achieve on behalf of their children:
   - protection from violence, abuse and abduction;
   - protections from hazardous employment and exploitation;
   - provision for adequate nutrition and health care;
   - provision for free compulsory primary education;
   - equality of treatment regardless of gender, race or cultural background;
   - the right to freedom of expression and thought in matters affecting them; and
   - safe exposure and access to leisure, play, culture and art.
3. The CRC establishes **the child's best interests** as the paramount concern.
4. The CRC recognizes the child's **evolving capacities** (i.e., children's rights to participate in society grow with their increasing maturity).
5. The CRC supports the family unit and emphasizes the **primacy and importance of the role, authority and responsibility of the family.**

Source: Premises of the CRC excerpted with permission from "Talking Points on U.S. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child," by Nancy Flowers, Amnesty International Educators Network, 1998. Emphasis in original.

The fourth and fifth premises stand as clarifications of misconceptions about youth participation and community development. Again, while there was not unanimous agreement among the group, it was clear that differences in how terms and phrases were interpreted contributed heavily to the perception that there were major differences in opinion.

Finally, the last five premises stem directly from ILG discussions and build heavily on the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the guiding document for youth work in most countries outside of the United States (see "Children's Human Rights and Youth Participation"). They contain two strong ideas:

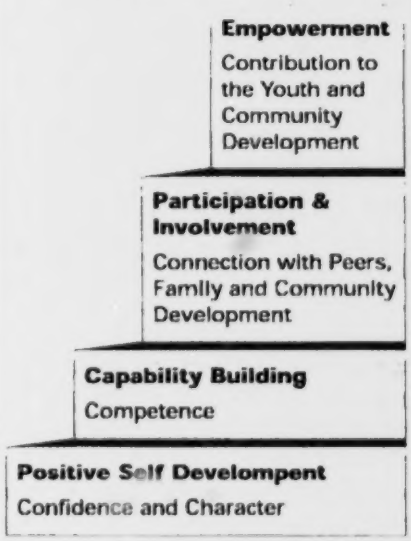
- Participation in community and civic affairs requires participation in school, in the family and often in the economy. Community and civic participation, in other words, requires protection, preparation and connections.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Participation is both a responsibility and a right. In the United States, we tend to emphasize responsibility, hence the development of language such as "give back" and "service." In other countries that begin with a rights orientation, participation is used to describe both access (e.g., participation in education or the economy) and action (e.g., participation in community change efforts). These ideas were echoed by many of the international ILG members. For one example, see Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

THE PROCESS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



To fully mobilize youth for community work they have to: 1) undergo a process of knowing who they are (self-identity); 2) nurture and enhance their potential; and 3) be significantly participating and contributing to youth and community development.

Adapted from Marilyn de Castro, The Philippines, comments on *Pathways for Youth and Community Development: A Discussion Paper*, April 1999.

The premises evolved through the ILG process clearly reflect exchanges with people that come not only from different disciplines, but different countries and cultures with differing assumptions. These themes, however, are echoed in the basic assertions that were developed through a long-term consultative process in the United States that led to the framework of community youth development put forth by Della Hughes and Susan Curnan in the *CYD Journal*[4] Winter 2000 issue:

- The development of young people depends first and foremost on growing up in safe, stable and thriving communities where they have the resources and opportunities to grow and contribute;
- Young people, even those that are most marginalized, have the capacity to contribute positively in their communities;
- Young people's participation is important to and inseparable from their individual development;
- Young people's participation is important to and, in some cases, instrumental to the social institutions working for change;

[4] Community Youth Development (CYD) is the short-hand term being promoted in the United States by the National Network for Youth, the Innovation Center for Youth and Community Development and others to cluster the array of rationales and approaches being developed to facilitate young people and adults working in partnership to create community and social change.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- The ability of young people to participate and contribute can be enhanced significantly through partnerships with adults; and
- Young people's participation can lead to the improvement of the overall social, cultural, economic and political environment.

While some consensus seems possible around these underlying ideas, specifics around goal and language offer more challenges.

What Is the Goal?

The ILG members immediately challenged the clarity of the terms — youth, community, participation, development — and their permutations and combinations. But the strongest discussions emerged around the legitimacy of the underlying premise that young people *should* be working with adults to create change.

Several of the international ILG members, reinforced by IYF's country partners in Latin America, challenged the idea that young people should be expected to contribute to their communities when their communities and countries had not upheld basic elements of their social contract with youth.

Why, many asked, should young people want to or be expected to contribute when they have been denied access to education, health care, housing, employment or when their families or ethnic communities have been denied representation in the basic political processes? Shouldn't community supports for youth precede young people's support for their communities?

After much discussion, we found that the force behind the question, "Why should we expect young people to participate?" came in large part from a negative interpretation of the U.S. concept of community service by non-U.S. participants. Rightly or wrongly, community service was understood as predefined hours of service committed to unknown people and communities.[5] Especially when contrasted with several of the Latin American programs visited — where the depth of young people's passion for their work was very much tied to the depth of their passion for the youth and adults in their communities — this "by the book" notion of community service seemed to be more about free labor than social responsibility.

In the end, the group agreed that young people can be engaged, should be engaged and want to be engaged to help change the conditions that affect their lives. It may not be realistic to expect those young people whose rights have been denied or thwarted to engage in abstract efforts to effect change that reflect the priorities of others outside their communities. Most members and partners agreed, however, that there was ample evidence in their own countries and elsewhere that young people are eager to work with adults to change conditions for themselves, their

[5] We should note that this interpretation of service is not limited to non-U.S. audiences. Some youth action organizations, especially those committed to organizing young people in low-income, minority communities, have voiced the concern that community service efforts are often either exploitive or paternalistic.

families and the members of their immediate community. The visits and discussions in Latin America left ILG members with the strong impression that, in spite of situations that are often extreme in their poverty, many young people in Latin America have a deep sense of social responsibility that far outweighs any individualistic sense of entitlement.

What Is the Language?

When they met as a full group in Venezuela, each member was asked to capture the essential vision, goals and strategies of their work in just a few words. The following are excerpts from some of their personal statements:

> *Empowering girls to mobilize community people and sensitize them through consultations and information to appreciate, encourage, support and respect the capacity for collective action of youths to take risks in trying new options that will transform society and create a society of healthy people under conditions of gender equality and social justice.*
>
> — Bene Madunagu, Nigeria

> *To enable the existing commitment, talent and community spirit of rural youth to contribute to the construction of a more just, sustainable and inclusive society.*
>
> — Francisco Gerdes, Mexico

> *To enrich the youth development field by seeking and promoting creative practices that engage youth and adults together in achieving positive developments for youth, community and society — often including social change for social justice.*
>
> — Wendy Wheeler, United States

While each used different language and emphasized different priorities, there was a common structure to their statements and a core compatability to their words. Essentially, each member described desired outcomes for youth and the community, described a process for engaging youth and engaging/changing community, and placed their vision in the context of the relevant political and social realities (see Figure 4).

Combined, ILG members' words create a basic story about engaging youth and changing communities for the ultimate benefit of both youth and communities — with awareness of and strategies to address constraints in the broader context. Linked together, these words and phrases begin to capture concepts shared by ILG members and many others working to promote the engagement of youth in their communities — strategies for change that include:

- **Supporting and building the capacity of young people to organize/mobilize** themselves in support of their own interests and those of their communities;
- **Changing social, cultural and political environments** to be more supportive of young people as stakeholders in society — through changing values, attitudes, policies and practices;
- **Transforming mainstream institutions** — schools, churches, health care providers, community development organizations, etc. — so that they see young people as critical stakeholders that need to be involved in the process of seeking and implementing solutions; and
- **Creating connections among organizations (both youth-led and adult-**

FIGURE 4

ILG KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Youth Outcomes
Belonging • Love • Responsibility • Spiritual Insight • Skills • Respect • Resources • Autonomy • Individual Health • Civic Participation • Communication • Individual Achievement • Economic Self Sufficiency • Voice • Efficacy
Community Outcomes
Strong Families • Partnerships • Solutions • Capacity • Skills & Resources • Organization • Self Reliance • Space • Dream • Creating Access • Self Employment • Recognition • Social • Information Access • Governance • Enterprise • Investment • Respect • Promotion • Responsibility • Social Justice • Safe, Healthy Physical Space • Shared Power • Efficacy
Context
Political and Social Crisis • Disadvantaged — Marginalization • Social Inequity
Youth Engagement Process
Learning • Involve • Inform • Support • Inspire • Enable • Learn by Doing • Teaching • Sensitizing • Action • Consciousness Raising • Strengthening Youth Voice • Equal Contribution • Provide Space • Action
Community Change Process
Partnerships • Learning • Networking • Information • Participation • Advocacy • Local Stakeholders • Mobilization • Organizing • Policy Change • Perspectives • Understanding • Ownership • Evaluate • Systemic • Facilitate • Local & Global • Intentional • Leverage • Critical Involvement • Decision Making

Source: *International Insights*, Volume I (The Forum for Youth Investment 2000, Spring).

led) that are already involved in engaging young people — in order to promote knowledge of good practices, develop an evidence base and support a wider social change effort through movement building.

For some of those working with youth, these assertions are a matter of common sense. But these people may not be the majority of those engaged in youth work. And they are certainly not the majority of those who control policy and shape practice.

The ILG project was born out of a desire to move from rhetoric to specifics about how to forge youth and adult partnerships, how to support youth as change agents, how to demonstrate impact. It was important, therefore, that Forum staff work with the ILG members to not only articulate the vision, but also identify barriers and strategies.

CREATING A LEARNING AGENDA

Over the years, both the Forum staff and the broader staff of the International Youth Foundation have worked with numbers of organizations in the United States and other countries in an effort to understand the different challenges involved in promoting young people as

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

. . . There is no shortage of programs and activities. What is lacking, however, is an understanding of how they really work, what larger expectations support them and what impact they have. Without this information, advancing the goals of community youth development, by any name, remains a challenge.

change agents in their communities. In the process we discovered that there are many different approaches and examples of strategies that engage young people meaningfully. But much of this is shared as case studies and anecdotes. What is missing is a distillation of these experiences into a coherent body of knowledge that draws from the work of practitioners.

The ILG members and the Latin America visit confirmed that there is no shortage of programs and activities. What is lacking, however, is an understanding of how they really work, what larger expectations support them and what impact they have. Without this information, advancing the goals of community youth development, by any name, remains a challenge.

With ample feedback from the ILG, the Forum developed a learning agenda to guide its own work and perhaps inform that of the ILG members and others over the next few years. If successful, this linked set of questions will deepen the dialogue and push all parties beyond rhetoric and anecdotes.

The Questions: What Expectations? What Strategies? What Evidence?

What are the questions? As a result of a process to identify their learning priorities, the ILG was challenged with three broad questions that serve as lenses for organizing knowledge (see Figure 5):

- *To what extent and in what ways are young people playing meaningful roles* in all aspects of community life?
- *What intentional strategies have been created* by young people and/or adults to enhance the capacity of young people to act as change agents?
- *What are the outcomes of these strategies?* What evidence is there that these strategies are effective in reaching, retaining and inspiring diverse groups of young people and adults? What evidence is there that young people's participation increases their skills and knowledge and/or changes conditions in the communities where they live?

Expectations and Roles

There are sizeable differences across countries and cultures in the extent to which young people are expected to work with adults to contribute, challenge and advocate for change in their communities. And within cultures, there can be sizeable differences in expectations by age, gender, race/ethnicity, education and/or family status. In the United States, young people are expected to become fully prepared by their early 20s, but beyond voting, expectations of how and when they should participate in community problem-solving are not clear. Equally important, there are also differences in the arenas in which

young people are expected or encouraged to participate. In the United States, youth participation immediately conjures up images of young people volunteering to tutor elementary school students, read to the elderly or clean up vacant lots.

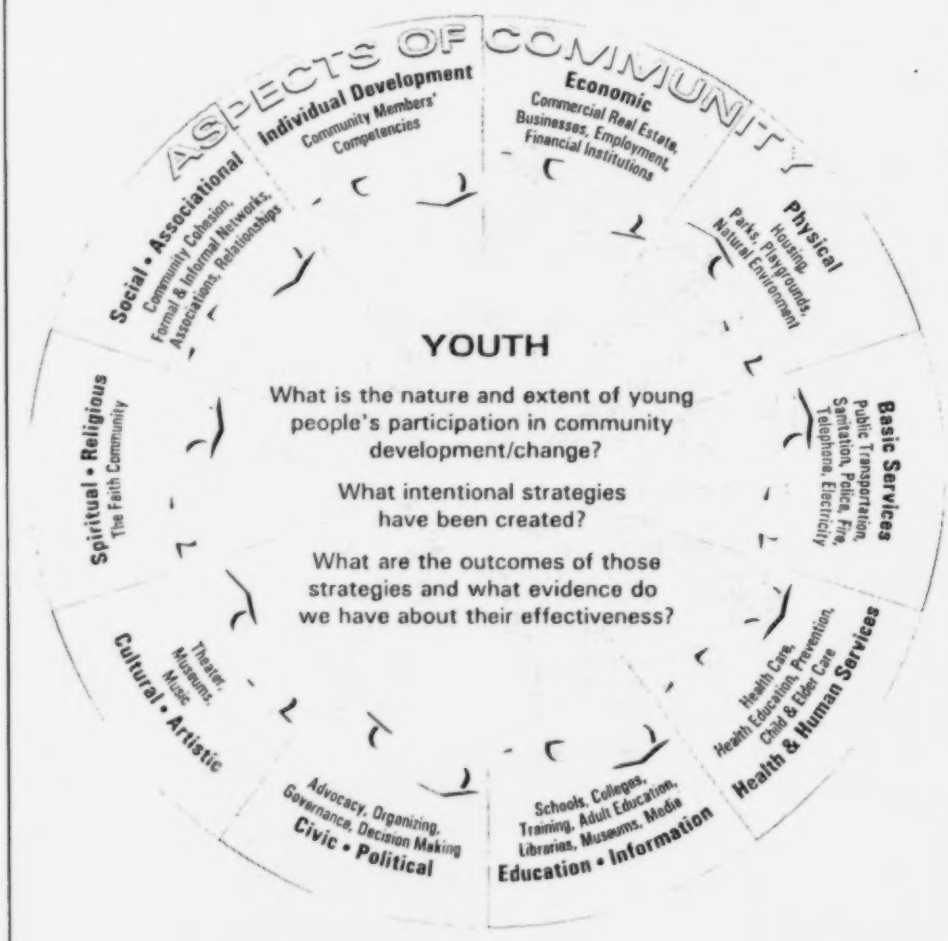
Promoting a sharper and more powerful image of community and youth development — young people and adults working together to effect change — requires clear articulation of the *range of roles* young people can play (e.g., service volunteer, organizer, advocate, planner), the *range of arenas* in which they can play (e.g., human services, housing, economic development, education, the arts) and the *boundaries of the expectations* shaped by the larger socio-political environment.

Strategies

Exactly how are young people engaged? What types of supports and opportunities

FIGURE 5

PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT


ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY
Individual Development
Community Members' Competencies
Economic
Commercial Real Estate, Businesses, Employment, Financial Institutions
Physical
Housing
Parks, Playgrounds, Natural Environment
Basic Services
Public Transportation, Sanitation, Police, Fire, Telephone, Electricity
Health & Human Services
Health Care, Health Education, Prevention, Child & Elder Care
Education • Information
Schools, Colleges, Training, Adult Education, Libraries, Museums, Media
Civic • Political
Advocacy, Organizing, Governance, Decision Making
Cultural • Artistic
Theater, Museums, Music
Spiritual • Religious
The Faith Community
Social • Associational
Community Cohesion, Formal & Informal Networks, Associations, Relationships
YOUTH
What is the nature and extent of young people's participation in community development/change?
What intentional strategies have been created?
What are the outcomes of those strategies and what evidence do we have about their effectiveness?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

are offered in programs, institutions, family, informal associations? What are the universal components of effective engagement strategies? Do the strategies differ depending upon whether adults *or* youth rather than adults *and* youth design them and whether they are birthed within or outside institutions? To what extent are shifts in power billed as primary goals versus referenced as by-products to effective youth action? It is critically important that the strongest examples of youth as community change agents be not only documented but also analyzed so that they can be strengthened and adapted for broader use.

Evidence Base

There are two key questions to be considered as we build the evidence base for why and how young people can work with adults to change their communities. The first, and most obvious, is the question of outcomes. Who benefits? How does participation contribute to youth development? How does participation contribute to real community improvement? The more practitioners and advocates can anticipate the need to answer both prongs of the outcomes question, the faster we will build a convincing evidence base.

The second set of questions is less obvious, but no less important. These questions speak not to the outcomes of engagement, but to the quality of the engagement itself. Conversations with many practitioners suggest that engagement strategies are not equally powerful in recruiting and retaining youth and in translating short-term participation into long-term commitment to action. Some are generally weak. Some have attraction and staying power with particular groups of young people. If one of the key benefits of the community youth development approach is an effective way to engage those young people who are in marginalized circumstances, then we must be able to demonstrate that there are replicable strategies for reaching them.

We should stress that these questions are limited. They focus mainly on the nature of youth engagement. They do not focus on the critical first assumption — that communities and societies have a commitment to support their children and youth. Both sides of the equation are important. The ILG's primary charge, however, was to focus on young people as change agents.

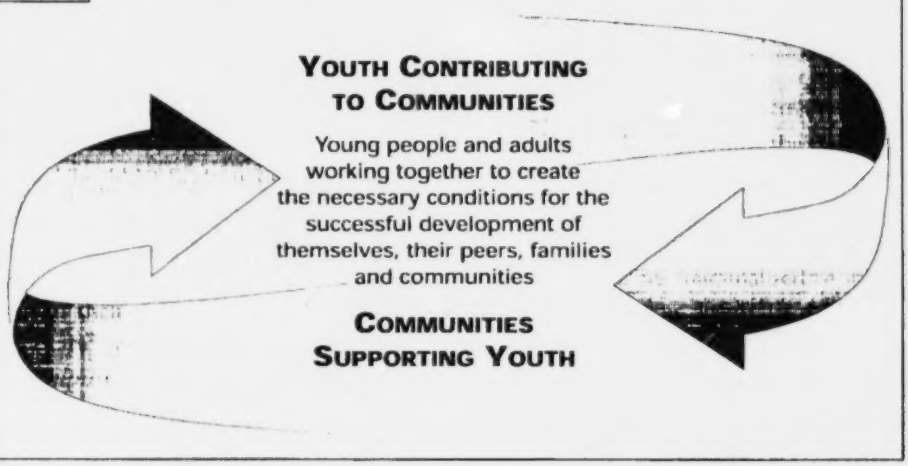
ILG members and Forum staff worked to pursue these questions through mini-projects, ongoing dialogue and their own work. Many of the lessons from their collective and individual struggles with these issues are captured in *International Insights* in *CYD Journal*, a bulletin that captured the pervasive and unexpected themes emerging from our conversations. Through *International Insights*, ILG members and others share valuable learnings. But it would be dishonest to claim that the learning agenda was fully addressed or exhausted by the conversations that involved ILG members. These were big questions with many answers — especially when asked in diverse international contexts.

To complement work of ILG members, Forum staff used the learning agenda to shape our Ford-funded work independent

of the ILG as well. For instance, questions about roles, strategies and impact have led to the identification of some of the lesser known examples across the United States and the globe where young people are actively engaged in making a difference in their communities. These examples are captured in *Youth Acts, Community Impacts: Stories of Youth Engagement with Real Results* (Tolman & Pittman with Cervone, Cushman, Rowley, Kinkade, Phillips & Duque, 2001), Volume 7 of the Community & Youth Development Series.

For ILG members, however, many of the most powerful answers to the learning agenda's questions came through the Latin American experience. Their central question: To what extent are young people — even those who are marginalized — playing an active role as agents in their own development and that of their peers, families, communities and/or society in general? To what extent could they? To what extent should they? (See Figure 6.)[6] The following section captures some of the answers derived from this most important experience of the International Learning Group.

FIGURE 6


YOUTH CONTRIBUTING TO COMMUNITIES
Young people and adults working together to create the necessary conditions for the successful development of themselves, their peers, families and communities
COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING YOUTH

[6] This question is also explored in depth in the companion volume to *Youth Acts, Community Impacts*, entitled *Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth* (Irby, Ferber & Pittman with Tolman & Yohalem, 2001).

25 A

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SECTION II

COMMON THEMES AND CONTRASTING CONTEXTS

Reflections on the Latin American Experience[1]

When I participate I change myself. When I change myself, I change my family. When I change my family, I change my community. And when I change my community, I change Paraguay.

— 17-year-old Carlos, from Paraguay

For the members of the ILG, Carlos' words were remarkable in many ways. First and foremost, they were remarkable for how unremarkable they were. Rather than being the extraordinary viewpoint, they captured the most common of themes. Time and again the young people that the ILG encountered talked about their beliefs in the importance of community and societal change and in their central role in bringing this change about. The words were also remarkable in how closely they echoed the central question that ILG members went to Latin America to explore:

To what extent and in what ways are young people — even those who are marginalized — playing an active role in their own development and that of their peers, families, communities and society in general?

Through dialogue with young people and adults, the ILG members grappled with the ways young people are being engaged to contribute to the development of their communities in Latin America. They also looked at different ways communities are supporting and nurturing the healthy development of young people.

After three days of concurrent traveling seminars, the ILG members and members of their host teams from Mexico, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela converged in Caracas, Venezuela's capital city. The dual focus of this meeting: To reflect on and share lessons learned from the site visits, and to share from the ILG members' own work and experiences.

[1] Portions of this section are drawn from *Young People Taking Responsibility for Change in Latin America: Reflecting on the International Learning Group's First Meeting* which appeared in *CYD Journal*, Winter 2000, Volume 1(1). This piece was written by Steve Mokwena and his colleagues at the Forum immediately following the conference.

The first day of this regional conference was devoted to sharing observations, reflections and lessons from the country visits (see sidebar). In an open dialogue among the various visiting teams, their hosts, Venezuelan leaders and young people that were invited to join in the conference, the group of more than 50 people worked to identify key themes and lessons about youth involvement in Latin America.

The participants used the basic reporter's questions — who, what, where, when, how and why — as a jumping off point for discussion of deeper themes. These questions (see "Framing Site Visit Questions," page 24) were part of a toolkit given to each ILG member at the outset of the site visits and allowed for some cross-country discussions of what ILG members and their host teams observed. The answers to many of the

THE ILG COUNTRY VISITS: HOSTED GLIMPSES INTO CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

By design, each visiting team included a range of perspectives — a combination of United States as well as international visitors, a range of disciplines (from research to practice), a variety of strategies and issues (from youth organizing to adolescent health). The host organizations, while all members of the International Youth Foundation's Global Partners Network, also represented a range of institutional strategies — from foundations (in Venezuela, Oaxaca, Ecuador) to large youth-serving organizations (Uruguay) to a network of youth organizations (Paraguay) to a new youth and community building initiative (Milpas de Oaxaca, cohost of the Mexico team). Host teams also varied, but usually included young people, researchers, policy makers and, in many cases, leaders of the community-based nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that were the focus of the site visits. As much as possible, these host team members accompanied the visiting team throughout the three days of site visits and conversations, allowing for rich, ongoing dialogue and exchange.

The learning activities, developed to explore key themes of interest to the host organization and host teams, were primarily made up of site visits to innovative community-based programs. These on-the-ground immersion experiences, focused heavily on conversations with young leaders, seemed to have an almost tactile impact on the learning group members. But each host also tailored the visit to reflect other aspects of their current work — or to help position the issue of youth involvement in community change more squarely on the public agenda. In Ecuador and Oaxaca, the teams participated in the meetings of national and state youth forums, respectively. In Paraguay, team members offered a panel presentation for government officials and nonprofit leaders. In Uruguay, the team met with local government officials to talk about how to scale up youth serving organizations. And members of the Venezuelan team were asked to meet with members of the national assembly, then in the midst of developing a new constitution for the country.

The reflections that follow indicate the wonderful confluence of cultures and ideas that emerged when over 50 people — the ILG members, members of their host teams, funders, local youth and adults leaders from Venezuela and guests — came

continues . . .

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

questions varied across site visits and countries, but there were some commonalities. For instance:

- **Who?** In every country the focus was on engaging disadvantaged young people. Ecuador and Oaxaca were both concerned with issues of migration, although the Oaxaca visit focused more on youth in rural communities while the Ecuador team focused more on the situation of young people and their families after they have migrated to the city. In both Paraguay and Oaxaca they discussed the challenges of getting young women involved in community work when more traditional roles kept them in the home.
- **Where?** "Spaces" for youth were also a key theme — psychic and physical

THE ILG COUNTRY VISITS: HOSTED GLIMPSES INTO CULTURE AND COMMUNITY, *continued*

together in Caracas to share and reflect on what they had learned. This was a unique opportunity for the ILG members. It was also a welcome opportunity for IYF's Latin American partners to come together with members of their own country networks to engage in discussions about the trends and opportunities in the region.

FIGURE 7

space where young people had a chance to think for themselves and plan their own direction. In some instances "space" was also interpreted as "room" — room not just to sit at the table but to create new tables. Youth were engaged in creating solutions in many spheres of community life — from economic development to conservation and preservation, from educational services to the arts, from local activism to national advocacy.

FRAMING SITE VISIT QUESTIONS[1]

Why? What reasons are given for young people to take an active role in development processes? What are the expectations that adults, programs, communities, and the broader society have for the roles that young people should play and why they should play them? What outcomes are anticipated? How are community outcomes balanced with youth outcomes?

Who? Which young people are taking action? Young men? Young women? Urban youth? Rural youth? What ages (older/younger youth)? What ethnicity? What religions? What skills/experiences/degrees/prerequisites? Which peers and adults do the young people work with?

Where? In what spaces are young people playing active roles as agents of change — the spaces where they live? learn? work? play? In what domains of community and civic life are youth working to make a difference?

What? What roles, rights and responsibilities? What roles do young people play within the spheres of community? What types and levels of participation and action are appropriate for youth? What rights to participate exist? What rights are being called for? What responsibilities to participate are placed upon youth?

When? Young people as change agents at what ages? What times during the day — school hours, after-school hours, days, nights? What times during the week — weekdays, weekends? What times during the year — summers, year round? What periods or stages of life — between school and work? Before starting a family?

How? (engaging young people) What strategies are used to increase and deepen youth participation? Do efforts attempt to increase young people's motivation and capacity to contribute, and their opportunities to do so? Do they focus on other elements? Are the elements sequential or interwoven? Are they linked together in the minds of young people? What resources and relationships are provided to support efforts? Are these clearly identifiable? Do they form paths, in the way that one can see and follow career paths? Are there clear pathways?

How? (influencing context) What strategies are used to create expectations and pathways? What are the building blocks to change? On which levels are changes being effected? Who are being engaged to make change happen? Youth? Parents? Practitioners? Researchers? Pollsters? Media? Philanthropic organizations? Policy makers?

---

[1] *Pathways for Youth Participation in Community and Society: Site Visit Questions and Tools*, includes an overview as well as framing pictures that accompany most questions. This tool kit is available in both English and Spanish and can be found online at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- **When?** ILG members saw young people of all ages deeply involved in creating community solutions. While older youth and young adults were the primary protagonists of the work in Oaxaca, children as young as eight proudly explained their contributions to the community in Venezuela.

The "whats" and "hows" are explored in more detail in the specific country reports that follow. But for ILG members, the most memorable lessons were linked to the most basic question — why? Why should young people be involved in improving their communities? Why (and to what extent) do communities and societies expect this involvement? And what are the reasons young people themselves give for wanting to make a difference?

WHY?

An Underlying Philosophy of Social Responsibility

After observing many community-based programs and speaking to hundreds of young people and adults, the ILG members concluded that the willingness of young people to take responsibility for change was driven by a powerful underlying ideology — a deep sense of social responsibility[8] and community spirit.

They saw this in La Vega, a neighborhood that clings to the hills above Caracas, Venezuela, where young people are the leaders in creating educational opportunities for children and youth. They saw this in Oaxaca, Mexico, where teenagers and young adults are replenishing the stocks of quail that had been an integral part of the traditional livelihood of their indigenous community, and in Ecuador where the young people of Cefocine helped to rebuild a community savaged by floods. In Paraguay, ILG members talked at length with young people throughout the country who were still reacting to the impact of El Marzo de Paraguay — a threat to democracy that was halted in large part due to the courage of young activists. And in Uruguay, they discussed strategies with young people struggling to identify roles that would allow them voice and input in broader community change.

A student participates in ILG discussions.

[8] Over the course of the meeting the ILG members and hosts came to use the term "social responsibility." The use of the term, however, was not meant to allude to the corporate social responsibility that has of recent years been a hot topic in international development circles.

What was clear from the vast majority of the young people members spoke with was that they were expected (and expected themselves) to become active in improving the quality of life for their families and their communities from a very early age. After visiting programs in Caracas, a subgroup of the ILG reported that they "saw a strong sense of responsibility to give back to one's community, to help others as you yourself had been helped." This perception was underscored by the report from Paraguay, which concluded that "None of the young people we spoke to saw themselves as service recipients or spoke of themselves as clients . . . they were all engaged in a process of change."

Without fail, when asked why they chose to get involved, young people simply answered, "in order to help my family and community." Speaking without a sense of entitlement, many of the young activists saw themselves as improving life for their people — their individual benefits were interwoven with those of their communities, and the two domains could not be easily separated.

Clive Willemse, a young community development activist from Namibia, remarked, "I was inspired by the deep sense of social responsibility from the young people of Venezuela. I keep asking myself 'What would it take to instill this in as many young people as possible in Namibia?'"

It was a question echoed throughout the ILG membership. To answer it, members tried to decipher some others: How pervasive was this ideology of social responsibility and what were its roots? How much was what they were seeing a reflection of the best and most innovative youth programs and how much could it be generalized to the experiences of young people throughout the city, country or region at large?

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities

The advocates and NGO leaders that were the ILG hosts assured participants that in many ways, Latin American countries were no different than countries across the globe where young people — especially those living in high poverty — are often either ignored or viewed as problems to be solved. The social and economic exclusion of the majority of young people by the society at large is a major concern in many of the countries. So much so that several of the conversations about youth participation — of how young people can contribute to their communities — opened with debates on whether young people could be asked to contribute when their basic rights had not been met.

> *How should rights be balanced with responsibilities? Especially when fundamental rights of access — to basic services, to education, to employment opportunities — are not met? How could we ask the question about young people contributing to their communities, without first fully exploring how communities were supporting young people?*

The programs that ILG members and host teams visited together helped to resolve much of these debates. In many of these programs, young people themselves were closing the loop between youth contribution and community supports. They

were actively involved in addressing issues of access and rights — through advocacy, through providing basic and educational services for their communities, through developing income generation projects, and so forth.

Focusing on Individual Benefits Versus Communal Good

The hosts tried to help ILG members, especially those from the United States and Europe, understand a mindset that focused more on family, community and social good than on the individual. But while much of the communal focus could perhaps be attributed to societal and cultural norms, ILG members were particularly struck by the strong change ideology articulated by young people inside of the organizations and programs visited. While curious about how much these ideologies reflected the perspectives of young people in each country more generally, ILG members realized that their observations were limited to just a few days visiting with young people in exemplary programs. But even for exemplary programs, ILG members were struck by the level of conviction and eloquence of the young people they spoke with. It seemed to exceed what many of them had witnessed in their home countries, whether in the United States or elsewhere in the world. There seemed to be something distinct about the visited programs in Latin America.

The difference? The change philosophies undergirding the programs were not just articulated by adult leaders. They were clearly and continually referenced by the young people as well. Philosophies of social responsibility, of community self-sufficiency, of social justice. What was the source of these philosophies? References were made to various roots: Pablo Freire, the father of popular education, and Simón Bolívar, the liberator of Latin America, for example. But whatever the source, two intertwined elements seemed clear across the countries and conversa-

ILG members visit a school in the La Vega neighborhood of Caracas.

tions: the importance of young people's awareness of the broader socio-political context, and the role of young people and adults in building this awareness among not only their peers but also the youngest members of the community.

Youth Activism and Social Justice

The group recognized the strong links between this ideology of social responsibility and the protracted struggle for social justice. Many of the communities the ILG members visited share a strong history of struggle for democratic participation and continue to fight for economic and social equality. For example, Milpas, a community development organization in Oaxaca, works with young people committed to asserting the rights of those indigenous communities excluded from the mainstream of social and economic opportunity. Reporting on the situation in Oaxaca, the ILG members pointed out:

> *Overall, youth are disenchanted with the political structure and are creating their own processes to meet their own needs. Overwhelmingly, they are disenfranchised with the educational system and are seeking ways to create effective and appropriate training and educational opportunities.*

As mentioned previously, Paraguay is home to many examples of young people actively engaged in the struggle to sustain democracy against the real threat of dictatorship. In March, 1999, thousands of young people formed a human chain around the Parliament to prevent the army from taking power. During these events, eight people were killed and over 200 were injured. Known as "El Marzo de Paraguay," these events catapulted young people into the spotlight as defenders of democracy and the "youth for democracy" movement was born. Explaining his participation in the events, a youth activist from Asunción reported to the ILG that "my family suffered under the Stroessner dictatorship . . . we were not prepared to see another dictatorship." It was this context, combined with the real experience of marginalization, that provided a political backdrop to the young people's activities.

Starting Young, Engaging Elders

Struck by the conviction and analytical sophistication of the young people in Paraguay and in other programs they visited, members of the ILG wondered what makes this sort of commitment and know-how possible. Drawing on her experience and research, Louise Hurley from Ireland reminded the group that the level of consciousness exhibited by young people in Latin America does not happen by accident — it is cultivated. She elaborated:

> *Young people learn by doing, through a relationship with other people who*

> *Someone thanked me and I said, don't thank me because it is an honor to teach the future of Venezuela. We are here now but we will be gone one day, and what we will leave behind is an imprint on the future of our country.*
>
> — A fifth grader from Utopia, Caracas, Venezuela

value what they are doing. The learners go on to teach others because they have gained something valuable. The belief in contribution . . . is thus deeply embedded in the consciousness.

Hurley's observations get at two principles of engaging young people, borne out in visit after visit. If young people "learn by doing," the earlier that young people start experiencing social responsibility, the better. Further, if relationships are critical to encouraging and sustaining commitment, then adults cannot be left out of the youth engagement equation.

These two principles help to explain the remarkable sucesses of many nongovernmental organizations visited by ILG members. Visiting the community of La Vega, in Caracas, the ILG members observed how Utopía, a community-based education program established in 1980, was bringing together young people and adults (especially mothers) to help with program activities. The young leaders of the program, such as Glenda Lopez who started with the organization when she was 10 years old, were clear about the underlying ideologies of the program, including self-sufficiency:

The members of Utopía woke up one day and realized that solutions won't spontaneously come from God, the government or anyone, and that if we kept on waiting, we'd just stay like that — waiting. So what did we do? We grabbed what we had — our people, the most important resource the world has. And I mean everyone, including young people. And we learned to work with that.

In Utopía, as at other organizations the ILG visited, adults work alongside young people to craft and model these underlying ideologies. Father Wittenbach, the Jesuit priest that helped to start Utopía over a decade ago, echoed Glenda's message of self-sufficiency when relaying the story of a large foundation that wanted to support Utopía's work. They declined the funds. Why? Because Utopía is about the community meeting its own needs. Which is why so many young people such as Glenda and her coworker Jose Javier plan to continue living in the community even after they have finished university. They have believed in the work of Utopía from an early age.

An even younger generation of leaders can be found at a school down the street from Utopía's community building where young children are connected to the philosophy and approach. There, ILG members met with a fifth grade class that was preparing math text books and providing tutoring for eighth graders in a neighboring community that did not have such basic educational resources. While the poverty in both neighborhoods was extremely high, the children at the school had benefited from Utopía's programs and wanted, in turn, to help out others.

In none of these examples are young people going it alone, whatever their age. Young people themselves were quick to point out the roles played by individual adults in the community, the church and other civil society-based organizations. Many of the adults brought a history and experience rooted in the quest for social justice. Adult allies stood

firmly behind the vibrant and enthusiastic actions of the young people.

Creating Space

While accepting the important role played by adults, many youth activists in Latin America also sounded a word of caution about the potential for adult manipulation. They were quick to criticize those adults who only used them as tokens and pawns. Some were deeply suspicious of adults in government, who they often saw as attempting to manipulate and placate them.

Although suspicious of government, young people still work to make their voices heard. In several places, the ILG observed young people were engaged in building broad-based youth platforms and youth forums that sought to consolidate the many voices of young people into a collective voice. In Paraguay, the youth were engaged in building a youth network called "Red Juventud," in Oaxaca youth created the "Popular Forum of Oaxacan Youth," in Ecuador they have established the "Foro Nacional de la Juventud," and in Venezuela a program by the name of CECODAP[9] works to educate young people about their rights and build a national advocacy platform for young people. These vehicles seek to ensure that young people's perspectives are factored into political processes and policy making.

From community work to economic entrepreneurship to political advocacy, many disenfranchised young people in Latin America are finding space and voice, not so much because they feel an obligation to "give back" to their country but because they can see real opportunities to improve their lives and those of their community. We have much to learn from their example.

[9] The full name, Niños, Niñas & Jovenes: Protagonistas en la Promoción y Defensa de sus Derechos, translates in English as: Children and Youth: Protagonists in the Promotion and Defense of Their Rights.

REFLECTIONS FROM

VENEZUELA

The young people of Venezuela swim against a tide of social conditions on their way to full participation in civic life. While previous generations were better educated, motivated by the social consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s, and supported by their families and communities, Victoria Bigio of Opportúnitas — Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud, argues that those growing up in Venezuela today must overcome numerous obstacles to become agents of change. But some young people, with the support of adults, are managing to overcome these obstacles.

It is in this context that a remarkable spirit of social responsibility has emerged. Tim Burke, a reporter, and Glenda Lopez, a young activist, describe the deep commitment to social responsibility they witnessed in Venezuela — focusing on Utopía, a grassroots organization through which young people are taking on numerous "adult roles" and enacting real community change. These daunting and hopeful stories, told in the pages that follow, are punctuated by the Venezuela ILG team's responses to the site visit questions — why, who, what, when, where and how.

THE VENEZUELAN CONTEXT

An Interview with Victoria Bigio

According to Victoria Bigio, director of Opportúnitas — Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud,[10] a number of forces combine to make the situation of young people difficult in Venezuela. This overview of the situation, based on an interview with Bigio prior to the ILG visit, attempts to assess the odds stacked against youth participation.

The 1970s were a turning point for Venezuela. Due to the OPEC oil crisis, large sums of money were coming into the country and Venezuelans, in comparison to other countries in Latin America, had a very high standard of living. Young people, inspired by theories, were fighting for a better world, peace and justice. University students represented all economic levels of society. Education was the road out of the barrio and into the mainstream.

Since the late 1980s, however, Venezuela's major economic and social changes

[10] Throughout this publication, affiliations noted were accurate as of the time of the ILG work.

have had a negative impact on youth. Poverty — previously between 8 and 10 percent — now averages around 80 percent. Venezuela's economic outlook is poor. The country has never developed an industrial base and remains heavily dependent on oil. Given this situation, many young people are pressured by their parents to drop out of school and help support the family. Jobs that are available to uneducated youth are marginal and frequently illegal. Sixty-one percent of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are excluded from basic education which, up to the 1970s, was an economic ladder out of poverty.

ILG VISITING TEAM

Warunee Fongkaew, Department of Medical Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Della Hughes, National Network for Youth, USA

Louise Hurley, The Children's Research Center, Trinity College, Ireland

Corina Chavez, Public/Private Ventures, USA

Clive Willemse, Change of Lifestyle Home's Project, Namibia

Tim Burke (guest), *Young People Now*/National Youth Agency, England

Merita Irby (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Maria Candamil (consultant), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Note: Affiliations are for organizations represented at the time of the ILG meetings in Latin American. For current information on ILG members, see Appendix.

While girls and boys are both effected, there are gender differences. Young girls often leave school early to get married, expecting to be cared for. Soon, they are caring for either their mothers or their own children, often unmarried and trapped in a permanent cycle of poverty.

The country is also in the midst of massive political change. The current president, Hugo Chavez, had been with the military and, after a failed attempt to gain power through a coup d'etat several years ago, democratically won the recent presidential elections. Chavez has declared both the Supreme Court and the Congress corrupt, and has called for a referendum on a new constitution. On July 25, 1999, Chavez' party won all but eight seats in a new 131-member assembly. His position is that officials should be elected based on merit, and he plans to hold parliamentary-style elections in the future.

In Venezuela you can't talk about youth participation without talking about the exclusion of young people from education and employment.

— Victoria Bigio, Director, Opportúnitas — Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud

Law enforcement is also a problem in Venezuela. The national police are largely ineffective and corrupt. The officers are generally poorly educated. Low salaries open them up to graft. Municipal police on the other hand must have a college education and are better paid; as a result, the public has greater confidence in the ability and integrity of municipal police. But there are many barrios where no police will venture; outsiders entering these areas must pay a "safe conduct" fee

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABOUT VENEZUELA: IN BRIEF

- **Total population (as of 1999): 24.2 million**
- **Population under 25 years old (as of 1999): 53.5%**

Opportunities for youth engagement in their communities and society are greatly challenged by the socioeconomic realities of life in Venezuela. For details on how the eonomic and political situation affects young people, see the interview with Victoria Bigio, host of the ILG team in Venezuela and director of Opportúnitas — Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud.

Source: Population statistics from the United Nations' Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000 edition.

COUNTRY VISIT THEMES

Employment opportunities for youth. There is a critical need for formal job placement and entrepreneurial training and support for youth. Eighty percent of college graduates cannot find jobs which enable them to be self-supporting. Many marginalized youth find access to any type of legal employment almost non-existent, leading to increased levels of delinquency. Join local actors in discussions about how these issues are being addressed by youth and youth-serving organizations.

Access to education is a critical need for young people in Venezuela. Sixty-one percent of youth do not have a basic education. There is currently a big push to encourage youth dropouts to return to formal and/or alternative schools. This push is good, but it is also followed by a prevailing sentiment that education will lead to better jobs, but this is not the case. Learn how NGOs and governmental organizations are addressing these issues in Venezuela and share your stories and lessons.

From Learning Forum Overview. Provided by Opportúnitas prior to site visits.

or face violence. Because there is such a wide economic divide, the crime rate has climbed dramatically in the past ten years. This further divides youth; those who have money and education build their own world, and those who don't steal what they can.

Over the past several decades, these many changes have negatively impacted on youth. The 1960s were a time of great social consciousness for students, who grappled with issues such as social justice, communism, anticommunism and so on. The 1970s saw the dawn of a new cultural group — hippies — fighting for a better world, for peace and justice. Young people were inspired by social theories. But beginning in the 1980s and continuing to present day, youth have lost an interest in issues affecting society. There are no leaders who inspire youth. The media is creating a vacuum in young people's minds. Venezuela has a "media-ized" youth. Rather than identifying as a social class, Venezualan youth now identify with their own small cliques/groups, often defined by their economic class or residence. They

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ILG members pause for a photo en route to a site visit in Venezuela.

no longer rally around large social issues. Small groups of youth now engage in narrow issues such as sports, ecology, cultural activities and religion.

Despite many efforts, the government has not been successful in building new and real opportunities for poor young people. Each year the population is growing and the number of children being excluded from education is also growing. In a population with 10 million young people, ages 3–24, 6 million are in school and almost 3 million are out of school. Of the 15–24-years-olds who are not in school, only 2 percent state that they have completed their education.

Although Venezuelans want their young people to be committed to improving their communities and their country, it is not possible to address issues of youth participation without dealing first with the exclusion of youth from education and employment opportunities. We cannot expect that young people will be able to give back before they have received these basic rights and opportunities.

How does one build youth solidarity in this environment? Victoria Bigio stressed that before you can start on youth development and participation, you must provide youth with access to education and jobs. The stories that follow indicate that young people are, in fact, beating the odds and making a difference in their communities.

SOUTH AMERICAN SPIRIT[11]

BY TIM BURKE

Tim Burke, who accompanied the ILG as a reporter for the United Kingdom's National Youth Agency's *Young People Now*, was struck by the deep engagement of the young people — even under the most difficult of circumstances. In an article originally published in *Young People Now*, he describes his visit, the young people he met, and the kind of community involvement he encountered.

There are many reasons why young people get involved in voluntary action in their communities. It may be because they were bored and somebody bothered to ask them to get involved; maybe they are idealistic or have a strong political commitment; or

[11] This article is edited and reprinted with permission. It originally appeared as "South American Spirit" in *Young People Now*, March 2000.

maybe they want to add something valuable to their CV. What was interesting about talking with young people in Caracas was that their reasons for taking part were overwhelmingly to do with a sense of social responsibility to their communities.

Venezuela is not the poorest of Latin American countries — its huge oil deposits have ensured that. Still, the country's riches are far from evenly distributed and 80 percent of the population live in poverty.

But in the projects we encountered, there was a very strong sense that young Venezuelans were not prepared to sit back and be victims of economic or political systems that excluded them. Part of that means claiming rights. The project CECODAP has been taking peer educators into schools and communities to spread the word about young people's rights for 15 years. Last year they convened a meeting of over 150 young people from all over the country to lobby the Assembly that has been writing a new constitution for the nation.

But perhaps more remarkable was the way in which young people assumed the responsibility of improving their communities.

HOW?

VENEZUELA TEAM REFLECTION #1: HOW ARE YOUNG PEOPLE BEING ENGAGED?

Education, Employment and Child Rights: An Overview of Site Visits

The group visited three projects, one in the community of La Vega that was an all-volunteer effort, and two nongovernmental organizations, EFIP and CECODAP. Additionally, we had the privilege of meeting with members of the National Assembly who have been working on the revision of the Constitution, specifically to hear about their commitment to youth participation. Our report does not intend to speak for all of what is happening in Venezuela or even Caracas, but only reflects what we have learned from our observations and what we heard at these three sites and our visit to the Congress.

Utopia — We were struck by the great sense of commitment by young people participating in Utopia. Utopia, founded in 1980, is a community-based education program run by young people from the La Vega community. The leaders of this program, about 50–60 older youth and some adults, do the work on a purely voluntary basis. Some of the young people have been involved in the program for more than 13 years, which testifies to the strong sense of social responsibility among these young people. Also remarkable was the number of mothers from the community helping with the program, an indication of the strong youth/adult relationship in bringing forth community change.

In addition to the library resource center housed in a community center owned, as we understand it, by the Association for Popular Education, we visited a school, Los Naranjos, that is working closely with Utopia. There we saw young people 11–13 years old whose lives have been transformed by the effort of Utopia to engage teachers in making public education more relevant and interesting for the

continues . . .

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

VENEZUELA TEAM REFLECTION #1, *continued*

The Venezuela team visits with members of the Constitutional Assembly.

It's important to take into account that we have a voice that needs to be heard about what we want to build in the future — a future that has to arise from our opinion in a joint fashion with adults.

Young Person, CECODAP

students. We heard great testimonials about how these young people have not only improved their math and reading skills, but also help other young people learn. At this tender age they are willing to take up the mantle of social responsibility.

EFIP — EFIP is a city wide, non-governmental organization that focuses on three key issues: information, development and training. In its program for development of youth entrepreneurs, it also makes loans to young people to start up small businesses. EFIP has a good relationship with some of the local businesses so that young people can be placed in jobs. This project is a good example of a youth and private sector relationship.

Children & Youth: Protagonists in the Promotion and Defense of Their Rights (CECODAP) — Niños, Niñas & Jovenes: Protagonistas en la Promoción y Defensa de sus Derechos (Children & Youth: Protagonists in the Promotion and Defense of Their Rights), known as CECODAP, is a national non-governmental organization focusing on children's rights and advocacy. We met young people ages 16 and 17 who have been involved with the organization for as long as six years. Again, we saw outstanding youth leadership. Young people at CECODAP see themselves as equal partners with adults. With reference to the constitutional changes in the country, the young people of CECODAP organized youth input into the constitution and will assume responsibility for monitoring issues with regard to children's rights and other matters pertaining to children and youth. Although they have experienced some opposition in advancing children's rights, they have been highly successful in their advocacy efforts.

Congress — Our team met with several members of the assembly elected to write the Venezuelan constitution. These representatives were pleased with and proud of the entire constitutional development process which had more than 60,000 Venezuelans participating, and with the attention given to children's rights and youth participation. They view this as a historic achievement in Venezuelan history, and it was exciting to us to have been able to share this time with them.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The Utopía Story

Take the example of the Utopía project set in the sprawling Caracas barrio of La Vega. Utopía is an entirely voluntary project spawned from the community focused on raising educational achievement. "We're not a legal entity — we're just a voluntary organisation from the heart," said Jean-Pierre Wittenbach, the local Jesuit priest who has clearly played an important role as community activist and teacher. An American trust offered the organisation a large grant but it was turned down — they did not want it.

"There are magnificent people in the barrio and these people are our resources," said Wittenbach. "We don't want experts from abroad giving money or telling us how to do things."

The project is run by peer tutors from within the community. These are young people who from as young as ten years old have been working as tutors for summer schools, and weekend and after-school classes to help, in particular, their peers who have failed or risk failing key exams. In an area of great poverty and few resources the project has been able to develop a library and study center, maintained by the mothers in the community. But the 50 or so young people involved also work directly with classes in a neighborhood school and do outreach work into the very poorest area of the expanding barrio to run informal educational activities, and attract young people to come and see what they can achieve.

Many of the young people we saw had been involved in the project for 12 or 13 years — this was no short-term fix but a major life commitment. "The young tutors from Utopía gave so much help to me and I wanted to follow their example," explained 21-year-old La Vegan, Jose Javier Salas, now a university student. "I had to put something back, I needed to feel useful, I needed to complete the circle."

Ask him nicely and Jose Javier will draw you a vivid picture of his theory of community youth development based on the water cycle. Your acts in the community fall on others and permeate down like rain, which will prompt issue ideas that float back up from the people affected by your action. They can then be encouraged and motivated to take action themselves, which will rain down on others.

Jose Javier's colleague Alex Useche has also been involved for 13 years. "I was recruited by a local person as a good student who might be able to help. And by the age of 13, I was teaching a class of 40 people math. Of course it was difficult but people's confidence and respect for me grew when they started to understand things for the first time."

Talking with the fifth grade kids from the neighborhood school it is clear that the cycle of involvement is starting again. Their first responsibility may be to build their neighborhood but it also extends to

> *We are no longer wanting to compete with each other, but to cooperate — to find out who knows what and who can share what.*
>
> — Utopía fifth grader on the Math Olympics

A Venezuelan student looks up from her studies.

building the nation. One class had been with Utopia to develop materials to help them in a city-wide Math Olympics:

It is very important to make progress and see how much more we can do than we initially thought," said one 10-year-old. "But we no longer want to compete with each other but to cooperate — to find out who knows what and who can share what."

"I teach other students to read and write and add," said another. "Someone thanked me and I said, 'Don't thank me because it is an honor to teach the future of Venezuela. We are here now but we will be leaving — and what we will leave behind is an imprint on the future.'"

The eloquence and analytical sophistication of the young people may suggest an unseen infrastructure of adult support — Jean-Pierre Wittenbach is the "father" of the project in more ways than one. But there is no doubt that these young people, and thousands like them, are prepared to take a lead in developing their communities. If you want more proof, just read Glenda's story.

WE CAN RAISE OUR MINDS UP[12]

BY GLENDA LOPEZ

Glenda Lopez, a youth activist from Utopia in Caracas, shared her insights with ILG members and others gathered for the ILG's visit. What follows is an abridged version of her speech.

I'm going to tell you a story. Once, a man went to visit a country. During his visit he met two workers that were building a church. He asked one of the workers "What are you doing?" and the worker answered: "Can't you see? I'm here sweating and tired under the sun, carrying bricks to build a church for a priest that certainly is stealing our money. I don't know — I'm tired, I'm fed up. When is this all going to end?"

Next, he asked the other worker the same question. The worker answered: "I'm really happy because I am part of a change process. When that church is finished, my kids will ask me who built that church and I will be able to answer, 'It is true sometimes it was really hot and I was

[12] An abbreviated version of this presentation also appeared in *Young People Now*, March 2000.

tired and we didn't always have the tools, but I built it and I did it for you and I'm part of that change process.'"

So, Venezuelans, and I guess any other persons, can be and act like either of those two workers. We can spend all our lives

WHY?

VENEZUELA TEAM REFLECTION #2: KEY CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES ENCOUNTERED

While we addressed all of the questions [set forth in the site visit tool kit], we chose to focus on the question that evoked the richest discussion among group members: Why? We identified several interconnected themes from our visits.

1. There is no artificial distinction made between youth development and community development.
2. The engagement of young people is undertaken:
   - as a mechanism for social development,
   - where young people are accepted and valued in the process as holders of rights, and
   - when young people are mobilized within society as socially responsible actors who, together with adults, can act now on problems, issues and challenges — as both a resource to the community and their own development.
3. The underpinning ideology and principles include:
   - social responsibility,
   - young people as holders of rights,
   - engagement over many years,
   - multidimensional strategies for impact,
   - young people in context of family and community, and
   - long-term outcomes.
4. Historical experience informs practice, as when:
   - communities come together and mobilize to address common problems and issues; and
   - social responsibility is learned through a continuous learning cycle.
5. Young people are engaged in the process based on:
   - the capacity to contribute,
   - the talent to contribute in a unique and special way, and
   - long-term results.

However, sometimes opportunities have to be provided to experience participative opportunities.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

complaining and saying, "Politicians are the ones to blame for all the world's evil," or we can raise our minds up and start working. The members of Utopía woke up one day and realized that solutions won't spontaneously come from God, the government, or anyone, and that if we kept on just waiting, we'd just stay like that — waiting. So what did we do? We grabbed what we had: our people — the most important resource the world has, and I mean everyone, including young people — and we learned to work with that, and we learned to love what we have.

I started in Utopía when I was 10. I realized that there were plenty of people here who valued me. I started working and realized that if I love what we have, if I assume a commitment of love, everything is possible.

Utopía has worked over 20 years without anyone's help, absolutely no one. Venzuela is going through a difficult situation, and we are faced with the situation of the church I told you about at the beginning. Our boss is not such a good one, we don't have all the tools and materials, but here we are, and we're willing to work!

I love where I live. I love having been born in La Vega. If I was given a second chance and asked where I wanted to be born, I would say La Vega again, and I would want Jose Javier to be my friend again because I know that if I hadn't been raised here I would be but a shadow of the person I am today.

POSTSCRIPT: RESPONDING TO CRISIS[13]

BY TIM BURKE

Within days after the trip's conclusion, several of the communities the ILG visited were decimated by floods and landslides that killed over 40,000 people and left many more homeless. The young people of Utopía and other organizations again demonstrated their commitment and capacity as they responded to this disaster.

As we drove inland to Caracas from the coastal airport I noticed what a curious landscape it was. Many of the 80 percent of the country's population that live in

Precarious neighborhoods rise into the hills above the capital.

[13] This update on the situation in Venezuela by Tim Burke appeared alongside his article "South American Spirit" in *Young People Now*, March 2000. It is edited and reprinted with permission.

poverty have gravitated from the countryside to the city. They have built their ramshackle dwellings in unplanned barrios that clamber ever further up the vertiginous sides of the mountains that surround the capital. "How do they cling on?" we thought to ourselves. "What happens in time of heavy rain?"

Tragically, we were to find out all too soon. For two weeks at the end of December the heavens opened. In Caracas, on

WHO?

VENEZUELA TEAM REFLECTION #3:

WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BEING ENGAGED?

The programs we saw reached a range of young people (male, female, of different races, urban youth, rural youth, and different classes though mostly lower. Venezuelans stressed to us that they have an open, pluralistic, ethnically mixed society which is more secular than many Latin American countries.

WHERE?

WHERE ARE YOUNG PEOPLE PLAYING ACTIVE ROLES AS CHANGE AGENTS?

We saw or heard of young people playing active roles in a range of places, including the community, schools, a center owned by the community, churches, Congress, businesses (both established businesses and street vendors), universities (especially the Catholic University) and homes.

WHAT?

WHAT ROLES, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES DO YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE?

We saw evidence of young people as leaders, teachers, coordinators, facilitators, multiplying agents, acting as family to others, employees, employers, mentors, advocates, spokespersons, role models, entrepreneurs.

WHEN?

AT WHAT AGE ARE YOUNG PEOPLE BEING ENGAGED? FOR HOW LONG?

Everyone can be a change agent but we found that between the ages of 7 and 10 children are being trained to think as change agents and start to work as change agents from age 10 or 11. They start young and continue working through school and university.

Utopía asks for a two-hour commitment each week from their young volunteers to keep it manageable — there is an expectation, not a requirement, that as they get into the work, their time commitment will increase. The aim is to ensure that your contribution comes from the heart and does not become a burdensome obligation.

All the programs worked with young people on a long-term basis — with a sense of growing developmentally so that commitment grew, matured and deepened over time.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

the south side of Mount Avila, there was an air of apparent normality. But on the north side, facing the Caribbean, things were very different.

"Vargas State has been all but erased from the map," said eyewitness Nick Baker. "The mountain slid toward the sea, wiping out towns, villages and barrios. There are tens of thousands of damnificados (refugees). Going west and east for 50 miles the same devastation is evident."

Jose Javier Salas, a young student from the La Vega barrio in Caracas, has been working with his colleagues in Utopía to give support to refugees.

"We've not been affected directly in Caracas but we cannot help but be aware of what has happened," he explained. "Many victims have been moved to a local sports center close to our base, which has enabled us to assist with recreational activities and emotional support for the children and young people. We have also helped by collecting clothing, medicines and food."

Even in the midst of the tragedy, Jose feels there is a silver lining in the way disaster has brought a spirit of national unity.

"It is a very difficult time for our country. But it is only by experiencing the the very worst moments that feelings of love, compassion and personal sacrifice can surface and unify a country which is as unequal as ours is."

Javier Gutierez is a youth arts worker in Catuche, an area almost completely destroyed. It brought an immediate end to his work.

There are notable examples throughout history of how a people who have been destroyed, have risen up through the efforts of the community. We are living that at the moment.

— Javier Gulterez

"I can't even think about continuing creative workshops when I have no idea what's happened to the people. We've had to forget about cultural activity and form all our staff into a single team that will allow us to help the victims quickly and directly and at the same time to work on a medium- and long-term plan."

All the people of Catuche have been scattered. It had a population of 10,000 and they were all located in different shelters. The first priority was to visit the shelters, find people and conduct a census to be updated as those who were presumed lost were found. Once people were reunited, the next priority was getting them new homes. There is a strong sense of community in trauma, one that is determined to pull itself up by its bootstraps.

"Many people cannot cope emotionally with what is happening," says Javier. But he has faith in the Latin American character to see them through. "I believe that in any situation like this, if one has a sense of community and the will to help others and not only oneself, many things may be achieved. There are notable examples throughout history of how a people who have been destroyed, have risen up through the efforts of the community. We are living that at the moment."

HOST ORGANIZATION: OPPORTÚNITAS — FUNDACIÓN PARA LA INFANCIA Y LA JUVENTUD

(Opportúnitas — Foundation for Children and Youth)

During 1998, Opportúnitas laid the groundwork for its national program that links the three sectors in an effort to position children and youth development as a national priority and to improve the conditions of Venezuelan young people. The program operates at national, regional and organizational levels and includes the promotions of social responsibility, design and implementation of the children and youth program, creation of a local fund(s) for children and youth development, and its own institutional development.

Its mission is to summon, articulate and connect diverse sectors of the country to build up a shared strategy that strengthens and expands the better practices and programs that benefit children and youth.

HOST TEAM

Victoria Bigio (host), Executive Director of Opportúnitas

Claudia Cova (host), Director of Programs, Opportúnitas

Andrea Pereira (host), Director of Development, Opportúnitas

Bigio, Cova and Pereira guide the activities of Opportúnitas — Fundación para la Infancia y la Juventud, the host organization.

Julio Permin. As a member of the EFIP Training, Information and Publications Team, Permin works with youth from high-density neighborhoods to help them play an integral role in the social and economic development of local communities and the country.

Cristobal Cornieles, UCAB Judicial Investigations Institute, Counselor to the National Constitution Assembly in the Development of the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (LOPNA).

Jose Javier Salas and **Glenda Lopez**, Utopía, La Vega. As young leaders of Utopía, Salas and Lopez are active in the La Vega community in support of various after-school activities, including informal education activities, neighborhood cleanups and catechism classes. Improving school performance and positive use of free time are the goals of these programs.

Source: Information given here was provided by the host team at the time of the visit in 1999. Victoria Bigio has moved on from her work with Opportúnitas, which is now under the leadership of Andrea Pereira.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFLECTIONS FROM

ECUADOR

ILG representatives spent two days with the young people at Cefocine, a youth-led program working to bring about positive change in some of the poorest communities in and around Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador (population near 3 million). ILG members toured three communities in which Cefocine is active, seeing Cefocine's projects in action and meeting local residents. The ILG also heard presentations by El Foro Nacional de la Juventud, (the National Youth Forum) during their planning conference. The Learning Group's host for this visit was the Esquel Foundation, which supports Cefocine. In this section, Sabrina Duque, a young leader of Cefocine and a journalist, gives a first-person account of the ILG's visit. We also hear from Jenny Nicholls, ILG member from Australia, as she reflects on the role of the arts in Cefocine's community change efforts.

The Ecuador Team also produced a vision statement of what youth engagement should look like based upon their experiences and conversation with the young people of Ecuador. Building on the "who, what, where" questions from the site visit tool kit, this statement echoes many of the insights and observations of the ILG teams that visited other countries throughout Latin America. As such, it provides a fitting conclusion to this series of reflections on Latin America and can be found following the final country report, on Paraguay, at the end of Section II.

ILG VISITING TEAM

Julia Burgess, Center for Community Change, USA

Pedro Bellen, Entrepreneurial & Livelihood Training Center, The Philippines

Rudy Chavez (guest), Youth Development, Inc., USA

Bene Madunagu, Girls Power Initiative, Nigeria

Jennifer Nicholls, Macquarie University, Australia

Ron Register, Cleveland Community Building Initiative, USA

Thad Ferber (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Note: Affiliations are for organizations represented at the time of the ILG meetings in Latin American. For current information on ILG members, see Appendix.

CEFOCINE: COMMUNICATING HOPE[14]

BY SABRINA DUQUE

Once upon a time there was a group of young people who were looking to work in the poorest neighborhoods of their city, so they could get to know the people who

lived there, so they could believe in them, play with them, awaken their creativity, and mostly, learn from them . . .

— Sabrina Duque

"It's not a fairy tale, but a growing reality." With these words Rafael Carriel, executive director at Cefocine, started telling the story of this nongovernmental organization — which, in fact, is more like a big family. Cefocine is a youth-led organization whose principal goal is for boys and girls, young people and women to recognize themselves as human beings who are able to create, participate in and manage their own learning processes.

When the ILG group arrived in Guayaquil, Rafael formally welcomed them. He introduced the team members and leaders of Cefocine: Maribel, Rafael, Ludy, Marvick, Nayla, Darwin and Brigitte, all young men and women concerned by the growing poverty in their communities. In all, Cefocine has about 30 members who coordinate a variety of programs serving approximately 1,000 children. I am proud to be one of those members. We are the people who make up

COUNTRY VISIT THEMES

Training and Job Acquisition. Given Ecuador's serious economic crisis and the number of young people forced into the workforce, training and job acquisition are critical needs. In Ecuador, 17 percent of the eligible workforce is unemployed and 60 percent is underemployed. The majority of unemployed and underemployed are youth. ILG members will have an opportunity to meet and talk with youth and youth professionals who are working to create new pathways to address these issues.

Youth Representation and Participation. There is also a crisis in the area of youth representation and participation in the national life of the country. Youth are excluded from decision-making involving their future and the future of the country. Esquel is a key supporter of the National Youth Forum and has established a Youth Advisory Committee, bringing together young leaders from throughout the country to provide the foundation with a young person's viewpoint on projects and programs. ILG members will learn how Esquel has developed this work and will have an opportunity to hear from young people about these issues and their solutions.

From Learning Forum Overview. Provided by Fundación Esquel-Ecuador prior to site visits.

[14] The story of Cefocine also appears in another publication in the Community & Youth Development Series, *Youth Acts, Community Impacts: Stories of Youth Engagement with Real Results* (Tolman & Pittman, et al., 2001). The version that appears here is based on the International Learning Group's visit. The updated story in *Youth Acts, Community Impacts* looks at Cefocine primarily through the lens of what changes it has brought about in the community.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABOUT ECUADOR: IN BRIEF

- **Total population (as of 1999): 12.6 million**
- **Population under 25 years old (as of 1999): 54.2%**

Crisis is the word that many Ecuadorians use when speaking of their country's economic, political and social situation. Poverty is the most serious challenge facing its people. Over 60 percent of Ecuador's population does not have the food, housing and basic services they need to lead healthy and productive lives. As a result, the majority of Ecuadorian families are locked in a daily struggle for survival.

Children and youth, who represent over half of the country's total population, are at the center of this struggle. Of these 6.5 million young people, more than 4 million live in poverty and 1.5 million live in extreme poverty. There are many barriers to their positive growth and development:

- 39 percent of young people ages 10 to 18 work in Ecuador — more than half work more than 40 hours per week, and 90 percent make less than the minimum wage and work in hazardous conditions.
- Nearly three quarters of each year's first-grade class will not complete primary and secondary school.
- Of the 100,000 young people entering the labor force each year, less than 1,000 are able to find jobs in the formal sector.

The government's response to the crisis facing Ecuadorian children and youth is largely seen as inadequate. In the face of reduced government spending, non-governmental organizations are working to fill a growing gap in support services for young people.

Sources: Population statistics from the United Nations' Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000 edition.
Text from Ecuador Team Report, based on comments by Modesto Rivas, Fundación Esquel-Ecuador.

Ecuador team and local host gather outside Cefocine offices.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Cefocine, and the phrase "communicating the hope" summarizes our life goals.

> *We are the people who make up Cefocine, and the phrase "communicating the hope" summarizes our life goals.*
> — Sabrina Duque

At Cefocine, our principal concern is the reality that when people live in marginal areas, they face a present and future full of barriers and conflicts, full of social and intellectual limitations. That is why, since 1995, we have been working on social projects as a way to defend the culture and life of different communities.

ILG members visit with Cefocine young leaders.

It starts with young people . . .

According to Ludy, a 19-year-old black teenager who began working at Cefocine while in high school, "We are trying to help the excluded sectors of society, promote human values and generate intellectual development." Young people like Ludy are successfully doing all of those things.

In 1995, Ludy was part of a project that Cefocine implemented at the high school located in her hometown, a low-income area known as the Trinitarian Island. The project was called "Creation of Student Video Clubs and First Inter-High Schools Video Fiction Festival." Since then, Ludy got involved with the whole process, stayed on, and is now working there. Like Ludy, almost everyone on the facilitating team is a young person who has been previously involved with Cefocine. "This reality of having team members that went through and had a previous experience with Cefocine shows the validity and sustainability of this program," Raphael explained to the ILG team at the presentation meeting at Cefocine's office.

The presentations that day started with a brief history of the organization, current projects and the statistics related to those projects. The next part of the day included site visits to the cooperatives, to help ILG members understand the work of the organization — not just on paper but with real faces, hands and smiles.

And play with children . . .

One of the projects that Cefocine does with children is called "Geminis: A Communication Experience." The project takes place at the cooperatives Julio

Cartageña and Juán Montalvo with about 95 children between 2 to 11 years old.

It is such an experience to see the work in Geminis. The children await the arrival of Cefocine's team for the games to begin. They draw and color their own cartoons on subjects that are prevalent in their lives and important to them like their family, violence in their communities, ecology, hygiene, their rights, relationships at school, and so on.

The children are the mini-directors of their own movies, because the cartoons they create will actually be filmed and kept on video. The children learn about audiovisual production as they learn about childhood rights, environmental preservation, hygiene, violence and problems that the children can identify around themselves. The project does this by playing with the children. The whole process is about playing, singing, drawing, painting and making the children feel free to express themselves. It is through these methods that their creativity and critical thinking skills are stimulated and they become little leaders in their community. The project also supports the creation and training of their own local community facilitators who can continue this process with the children whenever it is necessary.

Then mothers . . . and gangs . . .

"We started our work with children," Maribel explained, "but as we were working, we were finding other needs and we started to expand the work, to make new projects that were not just with kids." That is how the idea of working with their mothers and gangs was developed. Moving from working with the children of the community to working with their parents, Cefocine developed the project "Creative Hands and Minds," which broke down the isolation between over 50 mothers in the community, increased their self-expression, and fostered an economic women's handicraft cooperative.

"Before this, we didn't know each other," said one of the women at the group called

VIGOROUS YOUTH PROGRAM

Cefocine is one of the referral centers for the Vigorous Youth Program, which aims to provide sustainable development for Ecuadorian youth. "The Vigorous Youth project is like a big network in all of Ecuador. In every region and city, there is a referral center that supervises the different projects that are being developed," explained Modesto Rivas from Esquel Foundation.

In Guayaquil, the referral center is Cefocine, and there are some other projects like the one at the María Auxiliadora Center, which is a skill-building center and refuge for poor girls managed by the Salesian Sisters. The Young Communicators project has its own radio program where young people provide news, talk about subjects such as health and psychology with specialists, and interview politicians, authorities and social leaders. The Vigorous Youth Program supports a lot of different and interesting projects in all of the country and is made possible by the help of the Esquel Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the International Youth Foundation.

The project, "Gangs: A Bet for Hope" is the clearest example that, to the young people of Cefocine, youth are not just the "future of the country" but the present — they are powerful agents of change.

Hormiguitas (Little Ants). "We could have seen the other, but we never talked to each other. Now it's incredible because we are the best of friends." During evening creative meetings, they make handicrafts to be sold later. They've had so much success that these women are now productive members of their families and have their own entrepreneurial group. In addition, this group has valuable knowledge about the youth in this area that helps structure projects for them.

The project "Gangs: A Bet for Hope" is the clearest example that, to the young people of Cefocine, youth are not just the "future of the country" but the present — they are powerful agents of change. The main goal of the project is to transform the gangs into groups that can build their own lives and be able to generate processes of social participation.

Cefocine works with 245 young boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 22 who are living in marginal areas. The majority of the youth in the program have a direct relationship with gangs or were gang members themselves. Most of them went to high school but some dropped out to support their families. "The youth have all the energy and the enthusiasm," says Nayla Bersoza, a 21-year-old facilitator. "They can transform their community's reality through their work. All the energy that a *gang* uses in a negative way, destroying and scaring a whole neighborhood, could potentially be used in a positive way — making the community better."

But trying to make that hypothesis a reality was not easy work. When the project started, the community did not expect anything good to emerge for two reasons. The first reason was the expectations. The community considered the boys who were involved with gangs almost destined criminals — even their mothers did not believe in their potential for change. The second reason was the traditional roles for young people. In Ecuador, youth are not taken seriously. In spite of all the work young people are doing to be heard, the adults don't give them their deserved place in the "real world." The society thinks that the proper role of a young person is to study, but not to participate, propose, give ideas or set new rules.

But the results of Cefocine have changed the mentality of the communities with which it works. Everything is different now because we have a group of young people with a strong sense of self-esteem who are working, and generating processes of social and economic participation. The former gang members have learned to respect others, they respect the environment, and they have learned to channel their energy through the organization in educational, sport and ecological activities as alternatives to violence. In this way, those 245 young boys and girls have gained a new opportunity

The society thinks that the proper role of a young person is to study, but not to participate, propose, give ideas, or set new rules.

in life and the community has won a responsible and concerned group of youth citizens. Everybody wins. The only loser in this scenario would be violence, as it has met its defeat through youth participation and engagement.

This is the story of our lives.

"We have made a video that is called 'Our lives' and we are very proud. In the video we show all the ugly and sad situations that we've lived or saw before we entered this program: Drug addiction, alcoholism, rapes, fights, assaults, death. We wrote the stories, the script, we were the actors, and now all that we want is for that old reality to remain only a video. Like a bad dream," says Freddy, a 19-year-old boy from Julio Cartageña who benefited by the project "Gang."

"The videos play a really important roll at Cefocine," explains Marvick, the group's audiovisual director. "Making a movie, a video, is very important because the audiovisual work gives opportunities to use creativity and self-expression. They are free to expose their problems or develop video productions that reflect their own ideas about human rights, gender, group and youth participation. They have also produced the pilot of a radio program in which they give advice to other young people about behavior, health and familial matters. Now the young people have a project that supports them having a space on the radio with their own programming."

When the second part of the project starts, Jesus will be given the role of facilitator, in charge of a group of teenagers, managing the process. A member of Cefocine will evaluate and supervise him, but he will hold the primary responsibility for the project. In his new role — working twice a week, during afternoons after high school, for almost a year — he will help other young people, from 12 to 20 years old, to believe in themselves, know what they're worth, develop their communication abilities and be agents of change.

"... And now all that we want is for that old reality to remain only a video. Like a bad dream.

— Freddy, 19 years old

"... Since Cefocine arrived the youth have learned to dream. We really didn't have a clear idea about our lives, even about ourselves. In fact, now we are thinking about university, radio programs and our own companies. We used to be shy. We didn't believe in ourselves. We didn't care about anything. Now we are trying to make our neighborhoods and our lives better."

— Jesus, 17 years old

"At the beginning the boys and girls were very skeptical. In the first meeting there were four or five boys, all shy....Now I have to pray to get some silence," says Ludy, smiling. When the project started, Cefocine polled the youth about their interests. The poll revealed that they were interested in martial arts and dancing, so Cefocine made sure the first meetings addressed those interests. Bit by bit they gained the trust of the boys and girls, and more components were added to the sessions. Soon, they had video and debates about the issues that the group had selected as part of the daily schedule. In

addition, every session included some evaluation of the process and an evaluation of the positive growth of the participants.

At the time of the ILG team visit, the boys were proud to present their projects: the courier service "Megaentrega," the grocery store, the video club and others. "Megaentrega" has already begun. Six boys are managing and working for this courier service that delivers boxes and letters inside the city, and three companies have signed on with them. The other projects will soon be inaugurated.

Young people are gaining their place in those communities. They are the ones that have organized the sports activities, the contests, such as "the cleanest street" or "the most beautiful house." Young people are also the ones that helped fix the community center at Juán Montalvo, and they are the ones that pushed forth the idea in the community to create a park at Julio Cartageña.

The Stories of Two Communities

We turn now to the stories of these two communities — the changes that the young people have made and the events witnessed by the members of the International Learning Group.

Julio Cartageña Cooperative

The Julio Cartageña Cooperative looks like a little town in the middle of a sea of houses. It is very different from all the other cooperatives. It's not just in the way it looks; it's in the way the community acts that it is different. Julio Cartageña is on the top of a hill where you can see the entire north of Guayaquil. There are more than 4,000 residents, mostly children, youth and young adults under 30.

When the ILG group arrived at Julio Cartageña, a sea of children, youth and families were waiting to greet them and share their story of working together to achieve a common goal. First, the children and youth ran to welcome them and used the international language of hugs and kisses. After that heart-felt welcome, the people wanted to make sure the ILG team left a "footprint" to be remembered, and asked them to help plant some trees on the cooperative's land.

The ILG's site visit was a day of celebration at the cooperative. Everyone wanted to talk with the ILG members and be seen and heard. The children, women and young people met with the ILG team at the private school, which is near the Catholic Church. There they showed their abilities in dancing, singing, acting and puppetry. The women also showed off their handicrafts and gave some of them to the team.

The ILG visit with the women's group provided an opportunity to get to know a typical house in that area, which helped the ILG team understand the larger community context about where and what these people faced in their everyday lives. The house, like most in the area, was made of bamboo and wood. It had a single room where about ten people lived jointly.

In addition, a woman explained that when it rains, the entire street turns into a

Cefocine and local community members plant tree in honor of ILG visit.

river, and the garbage starts to float to the surface. "It's impossible to walk, because the currents could take you," said one of the women. The lack of community services has always been a big problem for the neighborhood. After El Niño in 1997, the neighborhood was left without potable water or a running drainage system. In an effort to help, people made septic wells that are now having a negative environmental impact. To top it all off, it is dangerous to use the public transportation system because of regular gang attacks.

Despite all of the problems, the community is different today. The people have recovered something that they lost a long time ago — their faith. Now, every single member of the community has a commitment to change — the women, the boys, the girls and even the men. For every need or problem, they are trying to find a solution. For example, from the beginning, the lack of recreational areas produced a breeding ground for trouble. Kids and teenagers met on the streets and soon formed gangs that started vandalizing the neighborhood. So the community decided to follow one of the young people's ideas and transformed a garbage dump into a beautiful park. They planted trees, installed swings and seesaws, and changed the face of Julio Cartageña.

In 1995 Cefocine, supported by the Esquel Foundation, started the project "Education for the Critical Perception in Children in the Urban-marginal Sectors of Guayaquil." They were advised to visit the Julio Cartageña Cooperative. The

project sought to help children develop critical thinking skills by using creativity and communications work. The cooperative successfully satisfied the prerequisites: it was an organization that was working with children; the community was in a development phase that would fit right into the work that Cefocine proposed; and five adults were available to accompany the teams at the workshops.

The women from the "First of June" (Primero de Junio) committee and the children cautiously welcomed Cefocine, and after a while the community became more open to Cefocine and worked with them with lots of enthusiasm. With each passing year the number of children, young people and women involved with Cefocine grew.

"In Cefocine we are still learning to believe in Cartageña and its people. We are part of their needs and their problems, and because of all this we too are growing as an institution. We are able to communicate the hope, because they are willing to communicate to us their hopes," says Rafael Carriel from Cefocine.

Juán Montalvo Cooperative

Every day is a challenge at the Juán Montalvo Cooperative. The hope that was felt at the community's founding (see "Juán Montalvo at the Gardens of Hope," page 54) had diminished over the years. Extreme poverty led to unemployment, alcoholism, drugs and delinquency — like black clouds menacing the families. The children were tired of doing nothing but being on the streets, and no organization was working in the area.

Things began to change in Juán Montalvo after one of the mothers heard about Cefocine's work in the Julio Cartegena Cooperative. In 1997, with support from the Esquel Foundation, the community began a project focused on developing the children's creativity, critical thinking and leadership skills.

Change was not easy. Apathy among the residents was evident everywhere. The community house even reflected it. It was abandoned, dirty and destroyed. People were divided, discouraged and disorganized. At the beginning, when the work began, the mothers were somewhat distrustful and didn't let their children participate because they were unfamiliar with the program. As the work became more well known and most of all when the children showed their enthusiasm for the workshops, the community as a whole became more accepting.

Since then, Cefocine has been making inroads. Now, in addition to the work with children, organizers have successfully engaged young people in the Gangs: A Bet for Hope program that gave rise to the Megaentrega courier service and other innovative opportunities.

When the ILG members arrived at the community house in Juán Montalvo to learn more about this work, no one could have imagined the experiences that would be shared that day. The program was great. The boys showed off their martial arts skills and the children gave presents to the ILG members. There were two performances: a play that illustrated the war between gangs, and a mime presentation about the old youth and the new youth of

JUÁN MONTALVO AT THE GARDENS OF HOPE

This community of Juán Montalvo started in 1983, when a group of farmers left the countryside to find more opportunities in the city, and invaded the lands around the Gardens of Hope Cemetery. The legalization of the cooperative began at the end of 1985 and lasted until the beginning of 1986, which is the official year the Juán Montalvo Cooperative was born.

Most of the houses are made of cement, some have wood mixed in, and there are a few made of bamboo. In the neighborhood, most families have electric light at home, there is public lighting and phone service, but no safe drinking water or sewage system. The transportation system is also incomplete. To transport yourself in this area is very difficult; the streets are in terrible shape and the criminals are prowling around making transportation at any hour very dangerous. The meaning of security has been forgotten at Juán Montalvo.

The delinquency levels grew daily, and even the police feared this sector. The neighborhood became a "no-man's land," a kingdom of violence where the mode of operation was the law of the strongest.

It was fairly normal to see families facing alcoholism, drug addiction, promiscuity and the absence of parents. Violence was common — women and children had a lot of disadvantages, and the men often resorted to violence in order to release their own frustrations. The high rates of violence inside those cooperatives were reflected in the numbers — ten assaults every day.

The high level of unemployment among adults meant women stayed at home or worked at scarce part-time jobs, while the men worked in industrial settings. The incomes were very low, a fact that frequently led the children to abandon school and start working to help their families. The negative physical aspects and lack of order in this neighborhood continued to make it hard for this community to thrive.

the community reflecting the changes in the life of a boy who had gone through the Cefocine program.

Something unexpected also happened that day. The boys and girls talked about their own experiences inside gangs. "That was something really special," says Maribel, "because before that they didn't admit that they had belonged to a gang. They always said, 'One of us that was in a gang saw this or that . . . .' They never said 'I was in a gang and saw that . . . .'"

Their confession made a huge impact. They talked about their fears, the rituals, the troubles and the way gang members harassed those who had left the gang. Their voices were soft and they cried. But for the first time they shared those painful experiences, and it was wonderful to see how the ILG team, who had been there only a short time, had really made them feel like they were true friends. Such friends that the young people felt comfortable enough to share experiences of their lives they had never shared before.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PAVING PATHWAYS: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE ARTS

A South American Perspective[15]

BY JENNY NICHOLLS

I have just returned from 12 days in South America looking at innovative programs in youth and community development. I am wearing my arts and education hat and carrying experience in grantmaking and funding programs through two terms as a Board Member of the Australian Youth Foundation, and the Drama Committee of the Australia Council.

Of particular interest was the work of an organisation called Cefocine .... This article is not focusing on definitions of community building or programs of sustainability for youth development. What is particularly relevant, however, is the acknowledgement by many young people in Ecuador of the role that the arts can play in being a catalyst for social change.

In one of our site visits we were warmly welcomed into the community by Julio Montalvo, where group after group of children and young people talked, sang, danced and presented their plays to us. This was a 'village' where gang violence was prevalent throughout all levels of the community. In a short time, however, the work of Cefocine has had a profound, and in some instances, overwhelming effect on these young people. A group of teenagers presented us with their own group-devised performance that reflected on how deeply gang culture was embedded in their lives and then the transformation that had taken place when Cefocine entered and began to provide them with alternative activities. I can't remember ever seeing a group of 16-year-old boys so enthusiastic about performing a devised theatre piece or looking so proud as they demonstrated their newly acquired martial arts skills.

For me, a highlight of the trip was a visit to Julio Cartageña. In this, one of the poorest settlements, the whole notion of community development was nonexistent before Cefocine began working with the youngest children. In what I perceived to be a truly remarkable achievement, the Cefocine team worked with the children to make video documentaries in the form of biographies. In these documentaries, children shared stories of their lives and hopes for the future. In time, the mothers of these children were encouraged to befriend each other and begin the slow process of creating community networks. Cefocine youth then taught handicraft skills to groups of mothers, beginning with only a few women.

Later more women joined the program, and when we arrived for a visit, we spoke to some 40 women who showed us the various crafts they had made with the financial support of Fundación Esquel. "Before Cefocine," said one woman through a translator, "I had no friends, but now these women are my friends, my family and my support." The women hope to generate basic or additional income by selling the handicrafts in local markets. Eventually they hope to establish a small business cooperative.

[15] Excerpts from original article published in Lowdown — *Youth Performing Arts Journal of Australia*, February, 2000 Volume. 22 (1).

In these site visits it was particularly interesting to observe that in nearly all instances, Cefocine made the children the point of entry for the various programs in each community. From there, the programs expanded to other members of the community, particularly young adolescents, women and mothers. All the programs that the International Learning Group witnessed were supported by non-governmental organizations. In most instances, radical life-changing opportunities were being created for relatively little money.

What was most intriguing was that despite the often catastrophic economic situations facing many young people in South America, their desire to create something, be it a video, a play, or a song, was overwhelming. Next to education, in fact, young people we spoke with felt that the opportunity to participate in 'dynamics' (an amorphous word we came to understand as meaning involvement in creative arts) was deemed almost a fundamental right. To have a voice, to share a story, to participate in creative endeavors were equally important as finding work or the provision of basic health care.

At the end of our four days in Guayaquil we flew to Caracas, Venezuela, and met delegates who had visited Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela and Oaxaca, Mexico. Again and again, reports came back from other countries highlighting the pathways for young people that were being created through various arts programs. These included pathways into adulthood, community networks, education and social change.

I believe we were unanimous in wanting to return to our own countries with a strong message to acknowledge, reinforce and support the rights of young people to be involved in all aspects of community development. Furthermore, to urge all decision makers to recognize that youth participation is a fundamental right of citizenship, and, as such, youth partnerships should be a key strategy in all levels of economic and social reform. For me personally, it also reinforced the very fundamental importance that the arts play in the lives of young people, something our governments and education systems have still failed to truly acknowledge.

HOST ORGANIZATION: FUNDACIÓN ESQUEL-ECUADOR

Fundación Esquel-Ecuador (FE-E) was established in 1990 as a national nonprofit, nongovernmental foundation dedicated to the economic, social and cultural development of the most disadvantaged segments of Ecuadorian society. In 1991, Esquel joined in partnership with the International Youth Foundation to strengthen its children and youth activities. FE-E's mission is to work as an agent of social change in Ecuador by supporting initiatives with the most disadvantaged segments of Ecuadorian society — principally children and youth, women and indigenous populations — to solve their own problems, modify current conditions that restrict their development, and help them overcome social injustice. FE-E's principal areas of interest include employment and enterprise development, youth leadership, and health and community development.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Ecuador team and local hosts outside Cefocine offices.

HOST TEAM

Modesto Rivas (host), Coordinator, Program for the Development of Children and Youth at Esquel.

Modesto Rivas (Quito) is 49 years old, and a graduate of the University of Central Ecuador in Economics. He has undertaken research projects in this area in Santiago, Chile and in Mexico. He is the coordinator of the Program for the Development of Children and Youth at Esquel. A university professor for ten years, he was also an advisor at the Planning Ministry.

Vincente Calderón, professional architect and youth leader, Christian Association of Dutiful Youth (ACJ).

Vincente Calderón, is a 27-year-old architect who works for ACJ of Manabi. He is also with the Vigorous Youth Program of Manabi. He has created ecology clubs, a foundation and a provincial network. Calderón has also worked for Amnesty International and the Research Center for the University of Manta. He works on alternative architecture social projects for mass housing.

Chrystian Cevallos, National Coordinator, National Forum for Youth.

Chrystian Cevallos, 22 years old, is the National Coordinator of the National Forum for Youth. He studies Sociology at the Catholic Pontifical University of Ecuador. He has been a youth representative at several international conferences, including the World Youth Festival (Havana, 1997) and the World Youth Meeting (Braga, 1998). He was principal author of the Youth Agenda (1996), and was involved in the development of the Youth Law (1999) and Youth Public Policies (1999).

continues . . .

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HOST TEAM, *continued*

Hermel Mendoza, social and agricultural developer and executive director of the Christian Association of Dutiful Youth ACJ.

Hermel Mendoza, 48 years old, is a social and agricultural developer. He is Executive Director of the Christian Association of Dutiful Youth ACJ. His work deals with community and neighborhood development, education, youth participation and urban issues, development of youth project plans, and community participation methodologies surrounding urban micro-credit programs.

Santiago Rivas, creator and technical director, Fundación Nuevos Horizontes, Azogues.

Santiago Rivas, 37 years old, is a doctor who graduated from the University of Cuenca. Rivas is the creator and Technical Director of the Fundación Nuevos Horizontes, Azogues. She works fundamentally with rural communities in severe poverty and with rural and urban youth.

Manolo Rodas, law student and founding member, Youth Forum of Azogues.

Manolo Rodas, 21 years old, studies law at the State University of Cuenca. He is a founding member of the Youth Forum of Azogues. He heads a program that involves university youth working on literacy issues with rural youth and adolescents. He is self-taught in the area of education. He was at the top of his class in school, where he was also the vice president of the student council.

Maribel Rufz, project director, CEFOCINE.

Maribel Rufz, 31 years old, is an Educative Psychologist who graduated at the top of her class at University Vicente Rocafuerte de Guayaquil. Rufz is the Project Director of Cefocine, a university professor and trainer-mediator. She has created and directed various projects for the integral development of children and youth.

Jeannina Vásquez, audiovisual communications student and founding member, Youth Forum of Loja.

Jeannina Vásquez, 21 years old, studies audiovisual communications at the Technological Institute of the Andes. A youth volunteer who has worked in rural areas of Loja and urban areas of Guayaquil, she facilitates youth leadership workshops and regional workshops on public policies. She represented the country at the Bi-National Meeting for Peace, Democracy and Development that involved youth leaders from Ecuador and Peru.

Source: Information given here was provided by the host team at the time of the visit in 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reflections from

Mexico

In Mexico, the ILG members focused their visit on the city and state of Oaxaca. The second poorest state in the country, Oaxaca is in the southern part of Mexico, bordering the state of Chiapas. The colonial city of Oaxaca is awash in pastel hues, and the nearby villages are known for a range of artistic micro-enterprise ventures. But the reality of life for the largely indigenous population is often harsh. For young people, education has been touted as the path out of poverty. But those who do complete school and university have only a handful of job options...unless they leave the community. The focus of the ILG visit to Oaxaca was on entrepreneurship and the development of youth-led efforts. The team spent intensive time together with a group of young leaders involved in developing a network of youth-led initiatives.

This reflection captures a snapshot of the exchange between the local young leaders in Oaxaca and the ILG members as they share specific initiatives they have developed related to income generation and micro-enterprise, and explore common challenges that they have met. The young leader of a remarkable local effort, Efraín Aragón Ibáñez, shares the challenges and successes of his organization's work to create economic opportunity for the people of Oaxaca. Efraín challenges the international visitors of the ILG to make this experience a true exchange of ideas and not simply a study tour. A Q&A between the ILG members and the organization's founders digs deeper into issues like education and the role of the state. Then, in the spirit of exchange, ILG members from Nigeria and the United States join a young leader from Mexico City to share their own experiences in starting up organizations around income generation and are, in turn, queried by the young leaders of Oaxaca.

ILG Visiting Team

Bas Auer, Youth for Development and Cooperation, Egypt

Bolaji Owasanoye, Human Development Initiatives, Nigeria

Raul Ratcliffe, Center for Youth Development & Policy Research, USA

Gregg Taylor, Community IMPACT! DC — Washington, DC, USA

Jules Dunham (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Francisco Gerdes (ILG member and host), Milpas de Oaxaca, Mexico

Note: Affiliations are for organizations represented at the time of the ILG meetings in Latin American. For current information on ILG members, see Appendix.

ABOUT OAXACA, MEXICO: IN BRIEF

- **Total population (as of 1999): 3.5 million**
- **Population under 25 years old (as of 1999): 52%**

With 18 different ethnic groups and languages, Oaxaca has the largest indigenous population of any state in Mexico. The state has 570 municipal governments causing spatial isolation and dispersion of its poorest communities. The mountainous terrain also makes it difficult to access many communities. These cultural, political and topographical charateristics make it a very fragmented state. The vast majority of its people live in poor marginalized communities, and more than 30 percent live in extreme poverty.

These conditions have hit the state's children and youth especially hard. More than half of Oaxaca's population is under the age of 20. Less than half of their youth complete primary school, and only 5 percent reach middle school. The economic crisis has forced many youth to work to support their families instead of going to school. In 1999, more than 25 percent of boys and 11 percent of girls ages 12 to 14 were working and more than 60 percent of men and nearly 30 percent of women ages 15 to 19 were working. In addition, more than 80 percent of Oaxaca's youth leave their rural communities and seek better opportunities in urban areas or the United States.

Source: Text and population statistics provided by Milpas de Oaxaca and Fundación Comunitaria de Oaxaca.

INCOME GENERATION IN CONTEXT: THE STORY OF COVORPA

BY EFRAÍN ARAGÓN IBÁÑEZ

Efraín Aragón Ibáñez is president of the community-based organization Committee of Volunteers for Reforestation and Environmental Protection (COVORPA), an organization he founded in 1994 with a group of youth from his hometown of Oaxaca, Mexico. In his opening remarks to the ILG learning exchange, he condemns the woeful inadequacy of state-sanctioned models of education and leadership in meeting the life needs of indigenous young people. He tells the story of how, through COVORPA, young people have worked to rejuvenate their community in ways that recognize traditions. For example, a main thrust of their work has been raising and repopulating quails, a traditional food source that was quickly disappearing from the region. They have also worked to return to more collective and inclusive forms of "leadership" that characterize their indigenous culture. Over the years, their work has earned them increased recognition, respect and voice within the community and beyond.

We would live by what our parents taught us . . .

Let me begin by telling you a story. Five years ago you would often find this situation: A student goes to school for many years. He finishes the university. He is afraid of the unknown and what is going to come next. He doesn't know what he is

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNTRY VISIT THEMES

Rural Youth Income Generating Projects. The root of the problem facing youth in Oaxaca is not a lack of access to formal education but a lack of employment opportunities and a lack of appropriate training that allows youth to create self-employmnet. Discussions will be held with youth on the current challenges they face in making their work economically self-sufficient as well as socially and environmentally responsible.

Youth Voice in Rural Areas. Youth in Oaxacan rural communities face the same challenges that youth face worldwide — a limited voice in economic and political decisions that face them. Recent changes in state statutes on the rule of law in indigenous communities are impacting youth participation. The ILG team and youth leaders will discuss the impact of such legislation on the customs of indigenous communities as well as the political and economic factors that uniquely affect each of the 18 communities.

Rural Youth and Migration. Oaxaca is one of the five leading labor-sending states of Mexico. From 1980 to 1990, net migration was twice as high as in the previous decade. Workforce data shows 7.5 percent of young people from 12 (the legal minimum for working) to 14 years of age are working in the formal job market. The ILG team will discuss how the issue of migration relates to the other themes within the communities, and ideas and examples from other experiences and contexts will be solicited.

From Learning Forum Overview. Provided by Milpas de Oaxaca prior to site visits.

going to do. There are no jobs for him in the community. Will he stay or must he move away? This was the reality of many of our COVORPA youth.

Through the years, we had forgotten what our parents and ancestors had taught us. We found that what we had learned in school did not prepare us to live in our communities. But we also found that there were things in our communities that we could reclaim and start working from. There were families and friends and love from others. And there was a willingness to change things.

We saw the injustice of paying high costs to go to school for five years and then not being able to do anything with it. We didn't want other members of COVORPA paying the same costs. When we go by the university, it is sad to see that the youth are wasting their time. You start reevaluating what you learn as part of the community.

We had forgotten many things because of the educational and economic system. But now we had decided to live in our communities. We would live by what our parents taught us. We started a group, COVORPA, to empower youth so that they had the power to do things for their people and for themselves. With COVORPA we wanted to show that young people could remain in their communities and have a good life.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

We decided to raise quails . . .

One of the first things we realized was that quails, which people used to live off of, no longer existed. As our initial project, we decided to raise quails and repopulate the rural areas with them. We got organized, and even though our initial intention was not that, now more people were getting organized so they could stay in their own villages. It is very motivating to see that the community has recognized that if they don't take their problems into their own hands, they are not going to achieve anything.

Being the first generation of professionals that decided to remain in their communities, we knew this might be difficult. Although we decided to remain in the community, we weren't willing to be marginalized and poor. We kept studying. We kept working. The younger members of our group attended school and with our work here we complemented that education. Believe me, if we could ask parents not to send their children to school and the young people would agree, we would ask them not to go to school. They could come here and learn more. But realistically, that is not possible now; maybe it will be with the generations to come.

In the beginning, we were all young and there were very few of us — only 13 or 14 — so we had no major role in the community because of the existing established community structures. Because we couldn't contribute in the community decision-making process, the people paid very little attention to us. At first, the community thought we were a joke. Even so, we continued working, and we truly felt we had a role because we were trying to do important things for our community. For us, having an impact or role didn't mean we wanted economic or political power. Instead, what was important to us was doing something that fulfilled us.

So we worked this way for two-and-a-half years. Things have not been easy. People started leaving the group. But we have also grown. You become more mature when you face and solve problems. I think that now any member of COVORPA could talk to anyone — no matter what his or her position in society — and not be afraid. Getting involved doesn't just bring you material benefits, it empowers you. So maybe when it comes to your traditional system of schooling, some members of our group are not "educated." But being able to face these problems certainly makes us "someone."

It's not about the money . . .

I hope that you will understand and interpret what I'm trying to say in your own way — the truth of the matter is that all around the world youth feel like they are nothing because people have made them think that they are nothing. Young people have to wake up to a real need in order to do things and be involved.

The quails remain the main thrust of our activities. Many families in the villages now have quails. And sometimes we work with other youth groups. We have shown them the possibility and given them the option of doing this work, rather than imposing it on them. Those who have

shown interest, we have shown how to do it. We are not afraid that someone will start producing more quails than us, because we started with the premise that we were going to give to the community everything we could give.

The more we have been freeing the quails into the wild, the more people see what we are doing and the more people have started to visit our organization to find out what is going on. We have become more attractive to adults, and they want to get involved in our work, but we have always limited their level of intervention in our decision-making.

Finally, I want to tell you that when people come here, they think that we are going to solve their problems — that we are going to give them the ideas and economic resources and tell them what to do. Even if we could give them the money, we wouldn't do it. They have to understand that money is not the end we are searching for.

When we started, we believed the only way we could get things done was by having money, and that money would solve everything. So we started generating income, and at this point we haven't had to beg at all for money — we are earning it ourselves. People have had faith in what we do, and the money is coming. If our goal was to get things accomplished, and not just have money, this meant we needed more than just money. By having young people decide to stay in their community and make a difference we were able to accomplish our goal, and we want to continue to strengthen them and their efforts.

Leadership means collaboration...

I really do not know what is going to happen next. I don't know where what we started five years ago is going. But we have learned and know some things that we do and do not want. We don't want people coming here and learning how to become "leaders" or "representatives" so they can manipulate others. We want to collaborate with other youth and adults. We want people to learn to lead by serving.

We understand that there are different definitions of leadership in other cultures, but for us it means collaborating. By our definition of leadership, we don't want to be leaders. We have tried to eliminate competition. We have left behind the modern electoral process where people get elected by votes. For us, leadership and power is the ability to work with others, not represent them.

We have also realized after five years that COVORPA is nothing if we don't involve women. When we go out to the fields and cities, we see young women are forgotten. We want to collaborate with them and have them join their motives and efforts with ours. Right now we don't have women in our group, but we want to include them. We should have started with a gender perspective from the beginning. Now our female friends are going to build on what COVORPA has created and we are going to work together.

Through all of these experiences we have learned that there is a need to create youth spaces in other communities as well. We have had contacts with youth at the local, national and international level,

and we have wanted to create an autonomous space here for youth where they can meet, have exchanges and intercultural dialogue. But that has also been difficult, because it has felt more like a one-way street — they take with them what we know and what we have experienced and there is no exchange of knowledge or experiences.

We don't like when people come and see us as objects to study. We resist this and see the anthropologist as the disguised colonizer that studies us and goes away and takes his studies with him. We expect our meetings and encounters to be mutually enriching for all the parties involved. It has been difficult because people don't want to share, they just want to see. They want to be the receiver and very few times can we have beautiful exchanges such as this one. We have participated in exchanges with international youth and have learned from different visions of what can be. And we see that we are going to use this mystical time at the end of the millennium to create proposals that come from the community.

I would like now for us to hear your questions, hear from other COVORPA members, and learn about what you are doing in your countries.

Questions and Answers

ILG: (Bolaji Owasanoye from Nigeria) I detect from your remarks a certain resentment against the state. Is this because the state is supposed to provide employment? When I graduated in Nigeria, the World Bank restructuring programs were starting, and there were no jobs. We were upset with adults because we went to school and then there was nothing to do. Does COVORPA foresee a symbiotic relationship with the state? Does it want the state to recognize COVORPA as an example that other youth in the state should follow?

COVORPA: CORVORPA is doing something because the state is forgetting to do those things — so it's not that we don't recognize the state, rather, we want to strengthen it. The state has tried to guide us and failed, and the opportunities that become available are usually for a small number. We don't want to fight with the Mexican educational system but we do hope that youth will see that there are other options and ways to do things.

Bolaji Owasanoye draws comparisons between the engagement of young people in Oaxaca and in Nigeria.

We want to prevent youth from doing things just because adults or a bureaucracy says it is good to do things in this way. To recognize this, the state has to see material, human and technical resources that are good.

We want to show the state that youth are capable of proposing things. We need to say clearly that the state has failed to bring general well-being to all of us. For example, when the official party candidate says he will bring a doctor to every pregnant women, we need to remind him that maybe those women don't need that doctor when he arrives. Such offereings are myths and promises and, if they do come, they will be available for only a handful of people. We want the state to realize that they have failed with youth and want them to listen to the voice of youth. So now the state will have to listen to the youth proposals.

ILG: How open is the local government to getting input from young people?

COVORPA: When COVORPA started, people saw it as a joke because we didn't participate in any community decisions. But now it is different....There is no official agreement with the authorities, but when they invite us, we go. This is different from the indigenous traditions, because in the indigenous community youth participate from the beginning. This community is relatively new, because before the 1910 revolution, rich farmers owned the land. The people here don't have an identity that's set in stone. In the decision-making of the community authorities, it is difficult to see the concepts of the indigenous people. So because of this, young people do not have a desire to participate. Traditionally, the community authorities hadn't paid much attention to us because they have land and are married.

We were each doing our own thing before, but now we have brought about this change. The fact that we have been able to rebuild the population of quails, and have brought resources and environmental improvements to the community, has caused the authorities to pay attention to us. Now we have a role.

The authorities, to an extent, see us as their competition, because we are doing more for the community than they are. However, every time the municipal government changes, we have to convince the new leadership of the same thing. This last time it took us a year and a half to establish connections with the new authorities. We were afraid at first that they wouldn't pay attention to us, but they are starting to understand what we do and think we're cool. Now when we have community meetings where decisions are being made, if our work is challenged, the other community members support our work and us.

ILG: (Bolaji Owasanoye from Nigera) Land ownership is a big issue in Africa as it seems to be here. How did you get the land that belongs to COVORPA?

COVORPA: COVORPA is located on land that belonged to the state but contained only abandoned buildings. This all started out as a failed initiative of the federal government that had assumed they knew what the community wanted. The government established the National Commission for Fruits and Agriculture, created a

training system, and provided technological packages. The government later abandoned this center and the community decided to take over the land. This land became part of the communal land. The land belongs to the community and was lent to us but with the requirement that in whatever we do here, there is an underlying commitment to help the community do what it wants to do.

We are transforming this space, our life and the way we see people. We haven't done this by ourselves. Now we have a place to host people — a restaurant. Young people trust us and see us as an example of what they could do.

ILG: Where does COVORPA get the money?

COVORPA: When the indigenous people have resources for community improvement, they hold community ceremonies to share the goods. We proposed the project to the cultural fund and requested $10,000 pesos — approximately $300.00. At that time, the three buildings were very dilapidated. The initial support we received was for the quails and we got donations from others for the materials we needed.

Many of the members got support from their families — they had no salary from the work they did. Some worked in the restaurant as a way to earn money. When we proposed this to the government, they gave us material resources, but we had to provide the human resources. People come to see and experience an exercise of autonomy firsthand. We do not try to compete in the restaurant industry — we work in parallel with this market. What we do here is sell the animals and vegetables that we, the youth, produce. I cannot say that this project is creating the livelihood for 13 people, but it is a process. We are learning not to be dependent on the state. One of the major expenses we have is the food for the quails, and in order to reduce our expense, we are learning how to make it ourselves. We are learning to create what we need and not rely on the mainstream solution.

ILG: What is the community doing to strengthen and provide solutions or more options for youth? Specifically, how is the education system supporting youth when they come out of the system?

COVORPA: In the communities of Oaxaca there is no proposal to look at how the system can change to support youth. Other regions of the coast or Mistaka may have realized how to improve the sector separately but not the whole infrastructure. I think one of the reasons why peo-

The educational system does not support the youth when they come out of it. Education is about experiencing different things and then coming up with a conclusion for yourself about what options and path to take. If there has to be reform, you can't say the system is bad; you have to say that it's good but that it is not serving everyone. The system has been around for many years and if the dead were to come back, one thing they would recognize is the education system. We have to convince others that the work that we do in education is valuable to the youth.

— Raúl, COVORPA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ple in the Central Valley section are not proposing any specific reasons to change the system is because they have taught us that the educational system is as good as it can be, and the traditional ways are barbaric. I have lived in a rural community for 26 years, and there has been some change, but the system and the "experts" are the same. The opinions of the so deemed "enlightened experts" prevents any consideration of the knowledge of the indigenous people. When all is said and done, the people end up accepting the current system of the teachers and experts, and leave their children to find their way around the system.

Learning Exchange: Income Generation Projects Around the World

Ario Higareda Pacheco
Civil Society Organizations Program, Iberoamerican University, Mexico City

Let me say a word about the urban experience in Mexico. We have discussed whether education and school are an option for life. There is an important ongoing debate at this moment about whether a better education — one that is made of more opportunities and more human development — will result in a higher quality of life. However, it is being proven that this isn't working for everyone. There are cases where education gives you a higher economic level of life but not necessarily a higher "quality" of life. Also, many times it doesn't even give you the higher economic level of life. We (at the Civil Society Organizations Program) have been working on generating programs that have an educational and income generation focus. I will summarize one of our experiences.

There was this street child who was nine years old and illiterate. They wanted him to go to school, so he tried it for one week. When they asked him how it went, he replied,

> *"I have spent seven hours a day here for five days and didn't earn one peso. Where I work now on the street I can earn fifty pesos a day."*

This is a problem. So now we have to create programs that have an educational piece and also generate income.

There must be two key elements in these programs: the actions have to be intercultural and across sectors. But it's difficult to find spaces to create these interactions. A program may generate income but not be educational, or vice-versa. When I talk about education, I don't mean an education where you give out degrees or diplomas. Rather, I am talking about an educational system that gives the student the tools to develop their own life.

In an urban project in Mexico City we have been able to join income generation and education. The key to this success was linking different sectors of the population, for example, large business with small businesses and the university. The small businesses sell products to large businesses, the universities train the small businesses in quality control, etc. The

project was called the Center for Community Development.

Gregg Taylor
Community IMPACT! DC, Washington, D.C.

At Community IMPACT! we talk specifically about strategies to raise income. We work in specific neighborhoods of about 10,000 residents. First you have to decide what small pocket you would like to work in. How can we get 52 families to work together and raise income to benefit themselves? What are the skills that are needed to generate income? And then we try to use the projects to generate money and to educate and train people in the skills they need to be income-generating members of their community.

Gregg Taylor shares from his experience with youth income generation in D.C.

In our community, an urban area, the first priority was to clean up garbage and make the community more beautiful, and hold some athletic events as well. For example, cleaning up improves the image for local businesses and helps them attract more customers. Youth would also get paid to clean up their community.

The biggest thing we want to share with you is that generating income doesn't mean money goes to an individual — instead it's income for the organization and for their community. Two things can happen: They can reinvest in the community, and organizations that are becoming stronger are then able to lobby more effectively for external resources.

Rubén Valencia
Center for the Promotion of Alternative Technologies, Oaxaca

In our organization, we came together because of the discontent we felt. We did not start out with the idea of an income-generating project. There are more bars than schools in our town, and so there is much apathy among our young people.

So what were the alternatives that we could do to start forming a creative space? There were no opportunities. Young people were considered people who hung out, formed gangs, but had no spaces to funnel their creative energies. So we started to create spaces.

The first project we did was renovating an abandoned library. We started to remodel the library and integrate youth in the work of rebuilding it, and we began by holding fundraising events. We were not able to achieve our goal, because the original owner of the library saw us working and was afraid of losing power. So he got funds from the state government, tore down the library and took it over. So now people saw us as failures because we lost our space, but it was never about the power struggle. We still feel that it is an achievement because the space is being rebuilt.

We also started working on reintroducing iguanas back into the wild. There was a lot of idealism in our organization and people wanted to liberate all the iguanas. But the farmers would not do this, as they live off of these animals. So instead we found out that a viable alternative would be to actually raise iguanas for food and that would be how we could save the iguanas in the wild. Out of this project grew an agricultural-ecological project that is an integrated farm with crop rotation. We are working with other groups, such as the community theater group, to promote ecological awareness. For villagers to change their habits like the types of agricultural chemicals they need to use, we use a variety of awareness-raising strategies such as Community Theater. We also have a puppet show that teaches kids about ecological awareness.

Questions and Answers

Q: Anna: In many parts of the world there is a problem with the transparency of funds. How can we make this sort of work transparent to our communities, so that we avoid competition with or suspicion of the income generation projects? How do you create a sense of trust in the community so people don't worry about what is being done with the money?

A: Gregg: For us what builds trust is time. We have a nine-year history of being tested every day. Because we have been there, there is a certain level of trust, but it is still somewhat fragile today. The second thing is that when you are talking about strengthening a neighborhood, we believe that partnerships are less about resources and more about equity. We formed a steering committee that came up with criteria for who could participate. Two-thirds of the people on the committee had to be from the community; one-third could be from beyond the community. We publicized the amount of resources that we had used and what we received — it was an open book. The committee decided what happened with the money.

So just to re-cap we had: (1) a balance between external and internal; (2) an open book about finances; (3) a committee that made the final decisions. Our role was to support those ideas. That is where the transfer of trusts lies. For instance, the work you do receiving the quails includes family participation. This is important because leaders often try to dictate, but you have to ask and trust the people. When you are done asking the families how they think they can produce more, document it and then go to funders. That becomes your advocacy platform — the input from the families — and not just the ideas.

Q: Bolaji: I seem to detect a problem between education and income generation in Oaxaca. Youth are disenchanted with education and would rather earn income. I think we are not exactly getting what education is after all. For example, you go to school to be an engineer and then you have no job available when you graduate. Education gives you the ability to study the situation and to use your skills elsewhere. The education system should free your mind and give you options, not *limit* your options to just one.

In Nigeria, having income and money is valued over education. Young boys in Nigeria don't want to go to school but would rather work and earn money. They think money gives you more respect than education. When they make money they look for wives with PhDs because they have found that there is something missing at the end of the day. The university where I teach started a program promoting adult education. Men have found a gap.

Is this becoming a problem in Mexico? Are the youth discarding education in order to generate income? I wonder if what we have in Nigeria will not affect our future. There needs to be a balance.

A: Ario: There are 98 million people in Mexico. Fifty-six percent are younger than 25. At this moment the youth that are studying at the university or at the pre-university level are 2,800,000. It is very disproportionate. The fundamental reason is the lack of money. A youth in Mexico goes to school or works or both. I agree that the only purpose of education shouldn't be to earn income. But for a young person to understand that is very hard. There is formal, informal and non-formal education. The challenge is to generate programs that can intersect all those levels of education.

Closing Remarks

Francisco Gerdes, Milpas de Oaxaca

Many useful themes have emerged from this discussion. How much does the educational system contribute or not contribute to income generation? How do we perceive education? Another fundamental theme is that income generation requires the participation of different sectors. In urban areas the private sector contributes more to support youth and in the rural areas it is government that contributes more. Another theme is how can youth strengthen their own organizations and, by doing this, strengthen their communities? The communities then start to value youth projects. Another question is what motivates youth to generate income? The initial motivation is never about how we are going to make money. One of the fundamental motivations is how do we generate satisfaction and improve our surroundings. Several of these youth projects don't start with the desire to generate income for income's sake, but rather to contribute to the greater context and create something that is fulfilling. Another issue is the confidence factor. As Gregg Taylor commented, time and the transparent use of the funds are critical to building trust.

THEMES FROM THE OAXACAN SITE VISIT

OAXACA ILG TEAM

In Oaxaca, the ILG team members saw four themes that were identified as important in the lives of young people, themes that influence their participation and where they choose to make contributions.

Communal Spirit of Youth

1. Young people have a strong sense of obligation to the community. Responsibility to the community precedes their individual rights. When young people are asked to perform community functions, it is perceived as an honor.
2. Young people see their views and initiatives always within the community framework.
   - It is important for youth projects to gain approval from the community and specifically from adults in the community.
   - Youth initiatives must gain the trust of the community and gain respect for their roles as contributors.
   - While income generating projects address the economic needs of young people, there is a strong focus on finding alternatives to a socio-economic system that marginalizes their community; young people need opportunities to live well inside their community.
3. The concept of youth leadership is very much focused on collaboration and serving, rather than representation.
   - Young people gain power by being active and gaining confidence.
   - Power for youth does not mean representing others or controlling spaces. It means improving your environment, contributing, having the knowledge that you can do things.

Importance of Indigenous Values and Identity Versus the Dominant Socio-economic System

1. There is a strong disenchantment with the dominant social, economic, political, educational and cultural systems.
   - The educational system does not support traditional knowledge, values and skills that young people find important. It even teaches opposing values and knowledge.
   - The political system is seen as corrupt and corrupting. Young people are strongly non-partisan. Youth feel pressured to ally themselves with a political party in order to get financial resources. They do NOT want to be involved in the political system.
2. Instead, young people have a strong link to participate in the social, cultural and political life of their indigenous communities.
   - Young people want to seek power and gain confidence through traditional processes.

- Young people are actively involved in the documentation and preservation of their language, customary laws and forms of cultural expression.
- Young people seek change and support from civil society that empowers them to seek recognition of their culture.
- Young people seek autonomy within their traditional practices and values.
- Young people have their voices heard:
  - As individuals through NGO boards;
  - By their contribution to traditional community management structures; and
  - Through media, radio and cultural expression.

EXAMPLES AND INSIGHTS

INDIGENOUS VALUES VERSUS THE DOMINANT SYSTEM

The educational system has systematically alienated youth from the rural community. This is part of a broader strategy of national development which has sought to modernize the rural sector through depopulation/urbanization of its inhabitants. Indigenous organizations in Oaxaca, in partnership with the state, are implementing alternative educational centers in which the national curricula is directly connected to the community reality through modules and the indigenous language and culture is incorporated into the course of study. While innovative, state financing limits the viability of such a project on a universal level — hence the need for youth to create their own practical learning opportunities according to their needs.

The Role of (Young) Women

1. (Young) women are less active in public communal life, due to culturally defined roles and patterns and because young women have less time due to other responsibilities.
2. Migration has forced women into new roles, previously owned by men. Traditional systems still resist these gender role changes. There are barriers to women's access to credit and education.
3. Young women regard their traditional and domestic roles as important — as valuable as the political roles in building up the community.
4. Youth groups are more mindful and willing to include young women.

EXAMPLES AND INSIGHTS

THE ROLE OF YOUNG WOMEN

COVORPA is a youth group in Oaxaca that was established for the explicit purpose of establishing self-employment alternatives through environmentally sustainable income-generating projects. As a group, they realize that there has been a shift in the role of women in community processes and family life. They are making an intentional effort to increase women's participation through outreach and by expanding the scope of issues that the organization is currently working on to include women in their project.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Migration

1. Migration is a historically and culturally inevitable process.
2. It is a process of importance to Oaxacan communities and society, in terms of the number of people migrating and in terms of the social and economic impact of this process.
   - Each year, 50,000 people emmigrate permanently out of a total population of 3.5 million
   - According a 1993 study targeting undocumented Hispanic workers in the United States, 70 percent were below the age of 30
   - Contrary to popular perception, it is not the poorest strata of the population that migrates. This is due to the cost of migration and the fact that many of the poorest do not have the health or the inter-personal skills that the migration process requires (such as speaking Spanish in addition to their indigenous language).
3. Migration brings important economic resource to communities. The remittances of migrants amount to:
   - 200 million U.S. dollars per year to the state of Oaxaca;
   - 10 billion U.S. dollars per year to Mexico as a whole; and
   - 100–150 U.S. dollars per family per month.
4. The process benefits many groups: service and agricultural businesses in the United States, the export agricultural business in Mexico, the middle- and upper-class Mexican families in the form of domestic labor, and the international corporations and financial institutions such as Western Union (which earn large profits due to the fees associated with the transfer of remittances and gains made from exchange-rate transactions).
5. Given the high cost of channeling remittances to Mexico, and the significant amount involved, it is important to find alternative ways to channel these remittances at a lower cost.
6. Resources are not always used productively and do not always benefit the communities. For instance, remittances are often spent on the construction of houses built by companies outside the community — houses that remain largely empty.
7. There is a need and there are new initiatives to make more productive use of the economic benefits of migration in the community.

EXAMPLES AND INSIGHTS

MIGRATION

Remittances are largely used for the upkeep of the migrant families. The communities benefit through the implementation of infrastructure projects like community halls, housing and auditoriums. Remittances rarely finance community initiatives that bring broader and more permanent social benefits, however, such as income-generating projects which could, in turn, decrease the existing dependency on remittances.

Migration is a very complex issue; patterns are changing and it is difficult to generalize across the state. Given that a high migration rate cannot be halted, part of the task is to look at migration as an opportunity to organize youth in the community.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HOST ORGANIZATION: MILPAS DE OAXACA

Milpas de Oaxaca is a nongovernmental organization that partners with organized villager groups to promote rural community development through initiatives that further self-reliance and ecological conservation of the earth. Milpas initiated and is coordinating a project aimed at increasing the abilities of rural youth to generate socially-responsible employment alternatives in their communities. Thus, Milpas and five other local organizations and institutions have recently created the Forum of Oaxacan Youth.

What's a milpa? A milpa is a plot of land, usually one to four hectares in size, where a family grows a diversity of nutritious foods, traditionally corn, beans, squash and chile. With this method of labor-intensive but environmentally friendly sustainable farming, rural families have practiced self-reliance and self-employment for centuries....the concept of the milpa illustrates the vision of the inseparability of agriculture, health, and environment, and symbolizes the complexity of the many aspects of well-being in rural Oaxaca.

HOST ORGANIZATION: FUNDACIÓN COMUNITARIA DE OAXACA *(COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF OAXACA)*

The Fundación Comunitaria de Oaxaca (FCO) was legally constituted in December 1996 through a collaborative effort among Mexico City and Oaxacan business and NGO leaders and five North American foundations. Its mission is to contribute to the integral development and improvement of the lives of Oaxacans through the promotion of social responsibility and the strengthening and expansion of effective and innovative programs. FCO's priority activities focus on children and youth, women and micro-regional development. Within children and youth development, FCO's interests include education, employment and income generation, health, cultural awareness, and life skills and youth leadership.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HOST TEAM

Efraín Aragón Ibáñez, COVORPA

Born in Reyes Mantecón, Oaxaca in 1969, Efraín Aragón Ibáñez studied biology and worked as a technical consultant at the Oaxacan State Autonomous University. In 1994 he founded a group called the Committee of Volunteers for Reforestation and Environmental Protection (COVORPA), with other youth from his community, where he currently serves as President.

Enrique Aragón Ibáñez, COVORPA

Born in Reyes Mantecón in 1973, Enrique Aragón Ibáñez studied biology at the Oaxacan State Autonomous University. At 24 he was the only youth elected to participate in Community Committees for Health. Through his position on the Committee he has promoted sanitary habits and the use of dry toilets. Currently, he serves as the Vice President of COVORPA.

Bernardo Barranco Villafán, Fundación Invertir

Sociologist of Religion, Paris, France, Bernardo Barranco Villafán has been General Director of Invest for Sustainability Foundation since 1996. President for the Center of Religious Studies in Mexico and editor for the weekly supplement, "Philanthropic Actions" of the Economist daily newspaper, he hosts the radio program "World Religions" for a station with one of the largest audiences in Mexico City.

Juán José Consejo, Institute for Nature and Society of Oaxaca

Juán José Consejo received a Masters Degree in Ecology from the Mexican Autonomous National University. Mr. Consejo is a teacher and founder of several local, national and international ecological groups. He is currently a consultant to IUCN National Parks and Protected Areas Commission, and coordinator of the Institute for Nature and Society of Oaxaca, which he founded.

Filogonio Cardoso Desiderio, Services of the Mixe People

A youth born in the rural community of Santa Maria Alotepec (a Mixe indigenous community), Filogonio Cardoso Desiderio dedicates his time to subsistence farming and working with the youth of his community in a musical group called "Kamapy." The group hopes to encourage and promote culture and rescue the traditions of their ancestors. He collaborates with the nonprofit organization Services of the Mixe People.

José Guadalupe Díaz, Services of the Mixe People

A youth Mixe linguist from the rural indigenous community of Tlahuitoltepec (a rural indigenous community), José Guadalupe Díaz currently collaborates with the nonprofit organization Services of the Mixe People in the Culture and Education department, focusing on the elaboration of the written and spoken Mixe language, with the objective of creating an alphabet.

Stephanie Gamble, Milpas de Oaxaca

Founder of Milpas de Oaxaca at the age of 25, Stephanie Gamble received a Bachelor's Degree in Social and Economic Development from the University of

continues . . .

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HOST TEAM, *continued*

Minnesota. Gamble has worked as a volunteer in the United States, Brazil and Mexico and directed the operative take-off of Milpas de Oaxaca in 1998 as Executive Director. She currently serves as Operations Director of the same institution and coordinates fieldwork in the areas of health and nutrition.

Alicia Sylvia Gijón Cruz, Oaxacan State Autonomous University

A professor at the School of Chemical Sciences in the Oaxacan State Autonomous University since 1985, Alicia Sylvia Gijón Cruz is an industrial and chemical engineer, with a Masters in regional development planning and doctorate studies in planning. She carried out studies regarding traditional diets and development in the Tlacolula valley from 1990 to 1993, and has studied international migration in the central valleys region from 1995 to the present.

Minerva García-Jurado Suárez, Civil Society Organizations Program

Minerva García-Jurado Suárez is 25 years old, and holds a B.A. in Business Administration from the Iberoamerican University (UIA) in Mexico City. Currently she is an assistant in the Civil Society Organizations Program of the Interdisciplinary Research Division of UIA. In this program she works to develop youth leadership and social responsibility among youth and the business sector.

Ario Higareda Pacheco, Iberoamerican University

Ario Higareda Pacheco, 29 years old, received a B.A. in Political Science and Public Administration from the Iberoamerican University in Mexico City. Currently he is the coordinator of the Civil Society Organizations Program within the Interdisciplinary Research Division of UIA. A W. K. Kellogg Foundation fellow within the Leadership in Philanthropy Program since 1998, he works to develop youth leadership and social responsibility among youth as well as the Mexican business sector.

Adelfo Regino Montes, Services of the Mixe People

A youth Mixe indigenous lawyer, Adelfo Regino Montes originally came from the rural indigenous community of Santa María Alotepec. Montes is a member of the Coordinating Committee for the nonprofit organization Services of the Mixe People, and an active participant in the San Andrés talks (convened by the Zapatista Army for National Liberation) in the Indigenous Rights and Culture table.

Rafael G. Reyes Morales, Technological Institute of Oaxaca

A professor and researcher at the Technological Institute of Oaxaca since 1983, Rafael G. Reyes Morales is an industrial and mechanical engineer, with a Masters in Planning (rural development), and doctorate studies on irregular urban settlements. He carried out a study on rural agriculture in the state of Oaxaca between 1984 and 1990. During the last few years he has been studying migration and its effects on families from the Central Valleys, Northern Mountainous Range and Mixteca regions.

Jaime Bolanos (host), Fundación Comunitaria de Oaxaca

Francisco Gerdes (host), Milpas de Oaxaca

Source: Information given here was provided by the host team at the time of the visit in 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reflections from Uruguay

Over the course of their visit to Uruguay, ILG members had the opportunity to hold lengthy interviews and structured discussions with their hosts from Foro Juvenil and meet with government officials, program directors and young people themselves. Rather than synthesizing these interviews, the group chose to let the transcripts themselves provide a glimpse of young people's opportunities for participation in Uruguay. Here we offer excerpts from the final ILG interview with Julio Bango and Malena Pérez (leaders of Foro Juvenil) and highlights from a three-hour discussion with young people.

Uruguay ILG team and hosts meets to discuss their reflections.

ILG Visiting Team

Marilyn de Castro, Baguio Center for Young Adults, Philippines

David Milner (guest), Community IMPACT! USA, USA

Wendy Wheeler, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, USA

Matthew Wexler LISC, USA

Karen Pittman (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Melissa Mullins (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, USA

Note: Affiliations are for organizations represented at the time of the ILG meetings in Latin American. For current information on ILG members, see Appendix.

Youth Participation in Uruguay: Creating Space during a Period of Apathy

Expectations and Opportunities for Participation

Foro: In Uruguay they should not be talking about the apathy of young people, but of society. A survey suggested that 80 percent of young people are not interested in the political process. But adults are also

ABOUT URUGUAY: IN BRIEF

- **Total population (as of 1999): 3.3 million**
- **Population under 25 years old (as of 1999): 40.6%**

Uruguay is an urban country, with nearly 90 percent of its population residing in citires. Economic problems and social unrest in the 1960 and 1970s led to the installation of a repressive military-led government in 1973. The nation gradually returned to democracy, electing a president in 1985 and conducting successive elections since that time. Poverty levels in Uruguay have decreased significantly since 1986, with 6 percent of the urban population defined as poor in 1996 versus 12 percent in 1990, according to United Nations statistics. While not as great an issue as some other Latin American countries, poverty continues to be a problem. Poverty issues in Uruguay have been attributed to the increasing disparity in income between skilled, educated workers and the unskilled and relatively less educated.

Since one of the principal causes of poverty is poor education, Uruguay has taken steps to improve the country's educational system. Despite comparatively high literacy rates, youth development is stalled by a national education system that does not receive adequate funding, has out-of-date curriculum and poorly trained teachers. To address these problems, the government has launched a plan for modernizing and extending the educational structure of the country at the primary and secondary levels at a cost of about 1 percent of annual GDP.

Sources: Population statistics from the United Nations' Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000 edition.
Text provided by Foro Juvenil.

apathetic — 70 percent. So there is only a 10 percent difference.

ILG: We have talked with young people and adults. We have visited some of your programs. But we are not sure we have a sense of how youth participation is viewed in the country. Can you tell us?

FORO: In Uruguay, young people are not encouraged to participate. Adults are apathetic about youth participation. Youth are perceived as a problem, instead of seen as a part of society. Not only are adults apathetic about youth, but they see youth as apathetic. They judge youth participation by whether youth are in the traditional institutions such as scouts. They use a very narrow lens. However, if they broadened their view, they would see that youth have other ways of organizing themselves, ways that are less institutionalized but that have concrete objectives. For example:

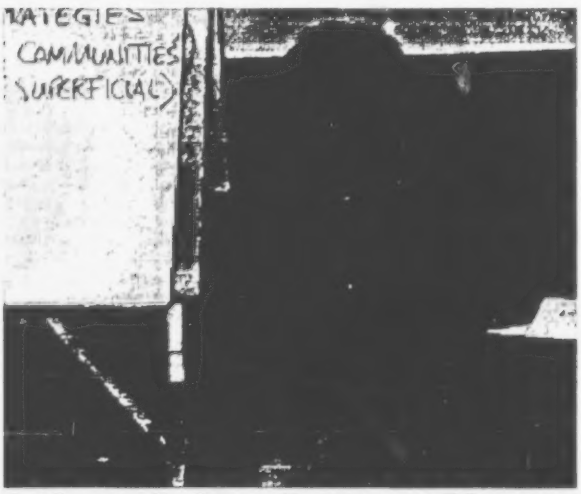
- In the cities young people collaborate to repair public spaces and create both musical and theatrical productions. There are over 200 theater groups with a great diversity of activities in which they participate. However, society as a whole doesn't see this as participation.
- In rural areas, youth have their own organizations. Even though there are not so many of these, they do get

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

COUNTRY VISIT THEMES

ILG members will be partnering with staff of the host organization, Foro Juvenil, to tackle issues such as what is needed to prepare young leaders and what are the challenges of scaling up opportunities for young people. One program of Foro Juvenil that the ILG members will visit is Puertas (Doors). It is a prevention program for urban youth living in high-risk environments. It works to provide a support system for youth who are attempting to transition from a crisis situation to a more stable life. The program consists of a network of reference centers where services are delivered, a permanent assistance center for sexually abused young women and teens, a Solidarity Network to coordinate public and private resources, service provider training and a public information effort.

From Learning Forum Overview. Provided by Foro Juvenil prior to site visits.



Julio Bango from Foro Juvenil in Uruguay talks with ILG members about community and youth development work in his country.

together, they talk about access to credit, access to jobs. Since we began, we have been helping the formulation of these rural organizations. And trying to help them organize themselves so they could present a platform representing rural youth. Every year we call a conference of rural organizations. One year it was attended by both the President and the Youth Minister.

ILG: We have heard about youth participation in other Latin American countries. Was there a time when participation was higher?

FORO: Yes. At the time of the transfer from the dictatorship in Uruguay there were hundreds of thousands of young people participating because they thought they could make something happen. But slowly, when young people saw that there were no spaces, they gave up, they did not see a big political space to get involved. Young people do take action when they see a space where they can move in and take power. When they don't see a space, it comes out in other ways. Young people organize cultural activities, music and theater. The network members perform for each other, but they do it in each other's homes. After a while they may look for public space. Adults don't offer many recreational and social activities.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ILG: Is anything changing?

FORO: In the national government there are discussions about fostering youth participation — but there are no pathways for youth to participate. The municipal government is trying to do something, but there are few resources. Foro Juvenil modeled the idea of youth centers in the country. Now the municipal government has taken up the idea. But there are 19 wards and the government only has enough funding to create ten youth centers with up to 50 kids who must fall below a certain income. The centers offer attractive spaces for young people. The government funds programs like the ones that Foro Juvenil runs to deliver services, but they don't pay us to connect young people to their communities; no one pays us for that, so the ability to do that depends on our own will, our collective action.

A CONVERSATION WITH YOUNG LEADERS IN URUGUAY

It is important to really understand the reality of young people in Latin America. Every country has programs where young people are already organized and supported in their actions. But it is important to understand the obstacles of participation for the most marginalized youth.

To help us understand, Foro organized a discussion with 11 young people and coordinators from four of the youth centers they have helped create. Young people addressed barriers to participation, to opportunities, and to youth-adult relationships, and also offered some solutions

Lack of Opportunities for Education, Work, Engagement

CLAUDIO, 18: You need to understand the reality in Uruguay. In many families, even middle class, it is complicated for young people to study. Half the people I know have to leave school to go to work.

NOELIA, 17: We have possibilities to study. But the problem is that when you finish, you can't get a job related to what you studied.

LUIS, 24: There are opportunities to go to primary, secondary, university. But if you want to study something else, to specialize, there is difficulty [getting training in] computers, or mechanics. [The programs] are not specialized enough.

HECTOR, 21: What we need is sources of work — more employment. What I see in my neighborhood is young people not doing anything, on the corners, on the street. That is the reason why some adolescents commit bad things: [They] have nothing to do.

ANA LAURA, 20: When you want to work, the first thing you are asked is your experience. But if you just finished school or a course, and you want to work, you don't have any experience.

LUIS: [We need] opportunities to have experiences. These are given to you when you have a contact, when you know someone, someone who could give you the opportunity. I had an opportunity at the youth center, but there are many young people who do not have these opportunities.

MARTIN, 20: Two years ago I moved to another neighborhood. There I had an

experience with handicapped people, now I [have been] working with them for four years. This is a job and an experience. I don't have a salary, but I like it. I consider it my work.

Strained Adult-Youth Relationships

NOELIA: I think there are too many prejudices from adults to young people. They judge you because of the way you dress...They don't give you the space because they think you are different. They don't give you the opportunity to show what you can do.

MARTIN: In the neighborhood...it is very difficult to do things, to get adults to take notice. Adults have their way of thinking...There are old habits. They will not change...[When they do not like something we do] they don't talk to us, they call the police.

CLAUDIO: There are too many old people in Uruguay. They have done their lives. They are comfortable, they don't want to change.

KARINA, 13: We are doing what the adults are doing — generalizing. There are exceptions among adults. There are many [who] can help us, [who] can advise us.

Potential Solutions

NOELIA: We generalize, but I know we have some common points of view with adults. Otherwise, the coordinators from the Youth Centers couldn't work with us. I think in each neighborhood there could be a youth center where young people and adults could come together to make projects and those projects would be made according to the perspectives of adults and youth.

VERONICA, 15: People cannot finish [school] because they don't have the money to buy the books or materials or pay for transport. One solution is to extend the age for using special bus tickets. There are free tickets for people under 16; tickets should be free until you finish high school.

HECTOR: There are many children in the streets asking for coins and food. The problem is that parents don't have jobs and food. A good idea is to open public dining rooms. This is not easy to open in a day. But at least to try to do it. How can we do that? Make groups — find people willing to do it, work on this.

PABLO, 15: [This is a good idea.] In the youth center, there are young people studying to be cooks. In the morning, they are not doing anything and they study in the afternoon. Perhaps they could cook in the morning and have the food ready for lunch, then be in the youth center in the afternoon. This is a way for them to develop their skills and experience and help their neighbors.

Strategies for Making Change

LUIS: I wanted to say that one of the ways to get our dreams is first to complain, then to suggest, then to find the people who can help us.

CLAUDIA: Let's talk about how to get what we want. We need an opportunity. Foro can help us with projects, to be closer to

the neighborhood. I remember, for example, at Tablada — we could organize recreational activities. At least to change the image, see something good not bad.

MARTIN: Looking from our perspective in the youth centers toward youth in the neighborhoods — if one of us were to tell the other youth how we think, it is not enough. Instead of talking or commenting [we must] go where they are and become closer. To help them look at what we are doing, feel what we feel.

LUIS: The solution to youth problems is in youth itself. As I said before, youth make suggestions. They want to do things. We need to find institutions and organizations that support those ideas and give the possibility to make those projects a complete thing. How can we get this? To bring all young people who have ideas and give them support. For those who feel like doing things but don't have the projects or ideas, give them any kinds of support — moral, technical support. They have expectations, give them an idea. For those without expectations or ideas, give them the opportunity to integrate in the youth centers so that they can meet people who are interested in things and can create their own interests. These kinds of things could be a solution to the problems of jobs or education and violence. You are creating values and ways of thinking which make you think about society differently.

ILG Members' Examples from Other Countries

DAVID, USA: Many of your ideas are happening around the world. I want to give three quick examples that speak to the some of issues you raised:

- **Recruiting other youth:** In Nairobi, Kenya, young people have roles and titles called peer motivators. These roles are like their jobs. Their job as peer motivator is to go into the neighborhood three hours every day to meet young people who are getting in trouble or leading other young people into trouble. To get to understand them and their dreams and bring them back to the youth center to do a project to address their interests along with the adults and other youth in the center. Then they bring their friends, more come. It is a job. It is on purpose.
- **Scholarships for studying:** In Washington, D.C., young people do projects like cleaning up the plaza. They ask people to support them with a certain amount of money per hour. Small businesses support them. Each young person gets a list of people who support them. The money goes into an education fund. The organization tries to double the money that the youth raise by raising money in the larger community. Then young people apply for this fund in each neighborhood to pay for books, transportation and clothes. Over $200,000 for these scholarships has been raised by youth and matched by the community. It is a special bank account that young people build.
- **Negotiating with a business to provide training and jobs for youth.** In the United States a construction company has been connected to a neighborhood through a partnership

agreement. They train young people in construction skills, they hire them every summer and, if they pass the course, they give them a full-time job. Thirty jobs are reserved for this neighborhood. You need the adults and the youth to want to do it and then to go to the company to negotiate a win-win partnership — youth get jobs, companies get great workers. It takes people and organizations and companies to invest time and resources in the idea. But it happens if you know what you want to do.

MARILYN, THE PHILIPPINES: The problems you have expressed today are similar to problems in a remote barrio — out-of-school youth, delinquency and adult perceptions of youth as useless. These are a challenge for the center-based workers, they know of the problems. [Here is how we engaged youth]:

- **Our coordinators went to the barrios and stayed there and made friends with the out-of-school youth.** They listened to their problems and got to know them as friends. As the coordinators got friendly with them, the young adults developed peer relationships with the workers.
- **They sought out and trained young leaders.** Youth were interested in sports — basketball. They played a lot. But [the work] didn't stop there. Along with that interaction with the youth, the coordinator identified leaders among them. They were able to identify 10 young potential leaders. They were invited for leadership training — to build confidence. This peer group was mobilized to work with the other young people in the barrio because the coordinator could not do all the work — they had hoped to reach 250 young people and they had a timetable. Peer volunteers build confidence, get training and go out to the community to plan things together, identify problems and discuss solutions.
- **They helped them work with adults as a team.** First the coordinator did the work with them. There were some wins, some failures, but the work was not restricted. We kept doing it until we succeeded. We increased youth visibility in the community — cleaned streets, painted walls, cleaned canals — and adults began to appreciate them. Organizers were also working with adults. They organized parents to discuss issues and understand youth. They selected projects and the adults provided funds while the youth provided human resources. The community is more peaceful with youth now working together as a team. There is a sense of community ownership, one common dream. Adults and youth talk together about how to solve community problems like malnutrition, water problems, garbage disposal and organizing a cooperative.

FORO JUVENIL'S LONG-TERM VISION

(Continued from Interview with Julio Bango and Malena Pérez)

If we had $1 million per year we could organize a strong youth movement. But the day the funding stopped the movement

would lose its momentum. Why? There are no government or private resources available to do organizing, so we have to take a slower route. Foro Juvenil has changed its strategies over the years. Today, we do a lot of work with marginalized youth — creating neighborhood center networks. Now we are at the point of getting the first products of this work. Young people have gained confidence and skills. Now they are going out into the community to connect, to form networks. In this way, Foro acts as an intermediary to connect young people's organizations to each other.

HOST ORGANIZATION: FORO JUVENIL *(YOUTH FORUM)*

Founded in 1981, Foro's mission is to promote programs and policies that expand social, cultural and economic opportunities for all youth in Uruguay. It does this by managing programs, raising awareness and influencing national public institutions and policies. Since 1985, it has been experimenting with alternative approaches to combat the problem of youth unemployment and under-employment, working to adapt and replicate best practices for the formal education system. Foro also provides support to small and medium-sized companies run by youth; space for youth culture demonstrations; services for the defense of youth's civil rights; programs for young people in poverty, without homes and in disadvantageous situations; and programs regarding young women, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

HOST TEAM

Julio Bango (host) is President of the Board of Foro Juvenil, an executive position. Julio is also vice-president of the National NGO Association of Uruguay, an umbrella organization for the sector. Julio teaches and conducts research at the University of the Republic in Uruguay and has been a consultant to various organizations, including the Ibero-American Youth Organization, the Kellogg Foundation and the Latin American Youth Forum.

Natalia Ferrari is a social worker, who makes up the team of coordination in the Youth Center Parque Capurro; her strengths are linked to the processes of community development, especially in networking.

Victor Minnetti is a social worker who has worked in the Youth Center Bella Italia since 1988; he works to promote youth participation, self-management and youth mobilization at the community level.

Malena Pérez (host) is the Primary Coordinator of the Puertas (Doors) Program and is responsible for supervising all program operations. Licensed as a history teacher, she has worked as an educator in the youth centers of the Puertas program since the beginning. Later she progressed into a management position in the organizational structure of Foro Juvenil.

Source: Information given here was provided by the host team at the time of the visit in 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Reflections from

Paraguay

Youth participation in Paraguay has been profoundly influenced by the country's political history — and in particular shaped by young people's hand in the country's 1999 return to democracy. Though young people are widely acknowledged as heroes and demonstrate a strong commitment to social responsibility, ILG members observed a nation hesitant to fully embrace young people's contributions. In their collective report, the ILG visiting team draws patterns and themes out of the conversations and site visits of which they were part.

ILG Visiting Team

Frances Lorenzi, Enterprise Foundation, USA

Anton Lopukhin, Association of Young Leaders, Russia

Eddie Silverio (guest), Alianza Dominicana Beacon, USA

Perrin Wicks (guest), Ford Foundation, USA

Steve Mokwena (staff), The Forum for Youth Investment, South Africa/USA

Note: Affiliations are for organizations represented at the time of the ILG meetings in Latin American. For current information on ILG members, see Appendix.

Youth Participation in Paraguay: In Defense of Democracy

When I participate, I change myself. When I change myself I, change my family. When I change my family I change my community. And when I change my community, I change Paraguay!

— Carlitos, 16 years old, Ciudad del Este

The Context: Young People at the Epicenter of Change

Until 1989, Paraguay had been under a 34-year military dictatorship. The president, Alfredo Stroessner, was forced from power by General Lino Oviedo who reportedly threatened him with a live hand grenade. The dictatorship ended and a democratic form of government was installed. Oviedo became a national hero and his political stock grew quickly. He became a power broker whose backing was essential for the success of anyone's political career and any major business endeavor.

In 1996, Oviedo and then-president Juán Carlos Wamosny broke ranks over a business deal between Paraguay and Brazil, leading to the threat of a coup led

ABOUT PARAGUAY: IN BRIEF

- **Total population* (as of 1999): 5.43 million**
- **Population under 25 years old (as of 1999): 40%**

Paraguay is a country with a largely agrarian economy and, until recently, characterized as traditional and conservative. It is also considered to be among the poorest countries of the hemishpere. Significant changes in the last 25 years have driven the country through an accelerated period of modernization, which included construction of the world's largest hydroelectric power station, the end of a 30-year political dictatorship, and a new transition to democracy. Detailed information on the context of youth participation in Paraguay is included in the Team Report.

Sources: Population statistics from the United Nations' Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000 edition.
Text provided by CIRD.

COUNTRY VISIT THEMES

Youth participation in Paraguay has been profoundly influenced by the country's political history. The power of youth participation was felt the most during the political unrest in March 1999, and youth-led activities are credited with protecting the country's democracy. Youth participation in community and society, as well as employment opportunities for youth, will be the main focus of the ILG visit.

From Learning Forum Overview. Provided by Center for Information and Resoruces for Development (CIRD) prior to site visits.

by Oviedo. Various governments and international organizations, including the United States, Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) and the Organization of American States, applied pressure to maintain the democratically elected form of government. Oviedo resigned his military position but was offered the Ministry of Defense in return. Paraguayan citizens, led by young people, demonstrated for two days at the Parliament to protest Oviedo's appointment, forcing the president to retract it.

Oviedo began his own campaign for the presidency as he was being brought to trial for the attempted coup. During his trial, he succeeded in becoming the Colorado Party's presidential nominee. But he was found guilty and was sentenced to ten years. His imprisonment led Raúl Cubas, the party's vice-presidential nominee, to become its presidential candidate. Cubas won the election and promptly granted Oviedo a presidential pardon. Many Paraguayans were outraged and began to organize in protest. Youth for Democracy, a non-partisan organization led by youth in their late twenties from a variety of political parties, is one of the influential youth-led groups that has its origins in the protests of August 1998.

A movement to impeach president Cubas gained support among the populace and legislators and the issue was

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

scheduled for a vote in the Parliament in early 1999. On the 23rd of March, the vice president of Paraguay was assassinated. He had been part of a rival faction within the Colorado party and President Cubas and Oviedo were immediately suspected. Public outrage, fueled by the fear of a return to dictatorship, spread through Paraguay. People also feared that Cubas and Oviedo would disrupt the parliamentary process in order to prevent Cubas' likely impeachment.

This led to a spontaneous demonstration, mostly by youth. Demonstrators descended on the capital city of Asunción and gathered in the plazas outside Parliament. The youth formed a human shield around the Parliament in order to ensure that Cubas and Oviedo would not disrupt the impeachment proceedings.

The crowd refused to disperse, despite attacks by the police using water and tear gas. The Catholic Church provided key support to the youth by opening up the churches in Asunción as safe places for the demonstrators. Activist priests marched shoulder-to-shoulder with the youths as well. On the fourth day of the protests, sharpshooters (who were widely believed to be connected to the police) shot at the crowd, killing eight youth and wounding 800 others. On March 29th Cubas stepped down and democracy resumed in Paraguay.

These events, called "El Marzo de Paraguay" (the March of Paraguay), are almost universally viewed as a defining moment for democracy in Paraguay. Throughout the country, youth were praised as heroes and guardians of the democratic process. A return to dictatorship had been narrowly avoided thanks to their courage. This flew in the face of stereotypical perceptions of youth as troublemakers who drink and take drugs. Since March, youth are widely seen in Paraguay as essential partners and leaders in the protection of democracy and the strengthening of political and socio-economic future of Paraguay.

Observations and Patterns

During our four-day stay in Paraguay, the ILG visiting team had the opportunity to meet with a number of organizations and informal groups, including:

- youth groups from the towns of Onondivepa, Tamblada and Lambare;
- youth participants of la Mesa Juvenil de Colonel Oviedo (a coalition of six groups);
- Teko Techaukara, a youth drama troupe that engages in community mobilization;
- Red Juventud de Paraguay (Paraguay Youth Network), which works to promote and strengthen member youth agencies throughout Paraguay;
- Proyecto Desarollo Juvenil (The Youth Development Project), the Paraguay branch of the Inter-American Working Group on Youth Development;
- the staff of the host organization, CIRD, which plays an active role in mobilizing Paraguayan youth; and
- Peace Corps volunteers who live and work with the youth groups we interviewed.

When asked why they chose to get involved, the overwhelming response from the young people was: "I want to help my community."

The March of Paraguay showed that youth are the country's present — not just its future.

— Enrique, 16 years old, Caacupe

These meetings — often taking the form of focus group discussions with young people themselves — painted a picture of young participation in Paraguay. As they described the state of youth participation, young people and their allies spoke to a number of issues including expectations; family, church and government roles; and their own rights and responsibilities

Young people also queried ILG members about the work of youth in other countries.

National/Popular Expectations

Since March 1999, Paraguay has taken a heightened interest in young people as participants in the political process. Young people were seen as responsible for defending democracy at a critical time in the history of Paraguay and are expected to continue to do so in the future. As the country faces severe economic challenges, many people — youth and adults — believe that young people will be responsible for its future stability and economic prosperity.

The Youth Participants

A broad spectrum of young people participated in our focus groups. They included groups that were church-affiliated, secular, sports- and arts-focused. We spoke to young women and men living in urban and rural areas. Women appear to experience more barriers to participation than men. They have very strong family responsibilities (especially the oldest girls in a family) and they are expected to contribute to the running of the home by performing tasks such as supervising younger siblings. Their participation in youth groups is viewed as detracting from these obligations.

Parents are more likely to support youth participation in church-sponsored youth groups. Parents view secular youth groups such as sports teams with suspicion.

Many efforts are made to include young people from rural and outlying areas. However, most of the resources and opportunities for participation are concentrated in the urban center Asunción.

As young people become more active, they also find more educational and civic opportunities. This is particularly true for youth from lower middle class and poor backgrounds. Higher levels of education and privilege do not appear to lead to higher levels of civic participation, however. Indeed, university students are not, by and large, activists in the forefront of social change.

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities

Overall, young people in Paraguay have assumed a tremendous responsibility for participation in their communities and the defense of democracy. They are also responsible for contributing to the well being of their families. ILG members believe that the responsibilities of young people in Paraguay far outweigh the rights they enjoy to basic services and supports. Their basic human rights are not affirmed.

The young people spoke of their right to improve their lives, to improve the well-being of their communities and to mobilize against the threat of dictatorship. Given the changing political situation and the renewed impetus for political participation, young people are calling for greater involvement in political decision-making. However, there are no clear paths and mechanisms to facilitate this.

> *The same politicians that say that youth are our future are cutting the budgets . . . . There is no money for schools. We have to go to CIRD or do our own fundraising. I am suspicious.*
>
> — Nelson, 29 years old

Government

Many young leaders expressed concerns about the ability of current political leaders to truly support youth participation. Young people stressed that the government's rhetoric on youth empowerment has not been backed by action.

While they wish to be fully engaged in their country's political process, youth are suspicious of government and politicians and do not want to be used as "political pawns." The young people expressed concern about the possibility of manipulation and coopting of youth by politicians in the central and local government.

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church is by far the greatest avenue for youth participation. Through the sacrament of confirmation and the year of preparation that precedes it, the Church gives youth a clear rite of passage into a more responsible role within their communities. Many youth relate their confirmation with becoming active in their communities, although some older youth say they have been engaged in community life since they were 10 or 11. Activism, which begins as part of a culturally required activity (the sacrament of confirmation), often becomes a voluntary activity.

It is important to note that confirmation and the group meetings and training that accompany it provide youth with a culturally approved reason to come together. Group meetings have not been a common occurrence in Paraguay, where the right to free assembly was not enjoyed by citizens under the dictatorship.

Our host organization, CIRD, and some of the youth we interviewed identified sports and the arts as a vehicle for youth participation. CIRD recruits youth that are active in different spheres and involves them in leadership training and capacity-building activities.

The Church has a significant and well-established network throughout the country that is available to support young people. It has provided critical support for change and youth connection in Paraguay. The Church's very active and public support of the El Marzo de Paraguay event heightened its legitimacy as a central institution in Paraguay.

Schools

Although schools were identified as an important institution that is well positioned to advance the interests of youth, the young people we spoke to did not consider it supportive of youth participation. Young people are increasingly demanding the right to an education as an effective preparation for adulthood. Youth consistently told us that schools have failed to give them the skills they need to be fully prepared. There is hope that educational reforms currently underway will change this situation for the next generation of students. Meanwhile, organizations such as Red Juventud de Paraguay, CIRD and the Alliance Foundation are helping youth develop the critical thinking skills that they will need later in life.

Community Outcomes

We were struck by the fact that the actively engaged youth we spoke to see themselves as acting in the best interests of their communities and their country. Young people identified the motivation behind their activism as the wish to improve the quality of life in their communities. Their own development was presented as secondary and supporting the broader social goals. This reflects the Paraguayan value that it is unseemly to talk about benefits to oneself, and it also reflects a strong sense of civic responsibility.

The youth we met saw themselves as defending and saving their peers from the threat of "anti-social behavior" such as drugs and alcohol. Young people want to participate because they are concerned about their future.

Family

There was little evidence or mention of the family as an institution providing support for youth participation. Although a few young people mentioned that they had the support of their families to participate in civic activities, many talked about difficulties with parents who tended to view any activity outside of the church as suspect. We did not hear of significant work with adults and parents. In fact, there was mention of strong differences of opinion between young people and their parents on the significance of El Marzo de Paraguay. While young people held strong and sometime militant views against Gen-

We have a dream of a better society, not just for us but for our community.
— Maritza Centurion, 21 years old, Colonel Oviedo

> *At first my family did not want me to join the group. . . . My teacher walked six kilometers to talk to them. Even then, it took three months for [my family] to be convinced.*
>
> — Caacupe male, 17 years old

eral Oviedo, some parents were not in support of the radical political actions their children took.

Families frequently need young people to provide support as income earners, and at times see their community activism as frivolous. Many young people explained that their parents often complain that civic engagement takes them away from their family responsibilities. One of the most important reasons why many parents do not support youth participation, however, is that many of them remember their neighbors being jailed or killed during the dictatorship because of their community and political activism. They do not want their children to meet the same fate, and so frequently adopt a policy of keeping quiet in order to survive.

Roles

In Paraguayan society, youth have roles as organizers, recruiters, teachers, advocates, fundraisers, planners, students, income earners and family members. In many cases, we observed that much of their activism focused on creating a sense of community. They did not describe many goal-directed activities. But many of the groups that we spoke to were at very early stages of their development. It was clear that with increased capacity and experience, these groups will be able to articulate their goals more clearly.

It was interesting to note that very few of the Paraguayan youth we met with were parents. In the United States, if we were to convene groups of 15- to 30-year-old young people from low-income backgrounds, a much higher percentage of them would be parents. Finally, none of the young people we spoke to saw themselves as service recipients or spoke of themselves as clients.

Methods of Youth Participation

The current thrust in this phase of youth participation appears to be the building of an organizational platform (mechanisms) for bringing young people together and developing their awareness and motivation for greater participation. This is particularly true of the Red Juventud de Paraguay whose mandate is to provide resources and information for organizations so young people can develop their capacity. As an institution, the church has played an important role in motivating, preparing and creating opportunities for youth to participate on an ongoing basis. CIRD plays an important role in the dissemination of information for youth involvement possibilities.

Capacity Builders

The main strategy for increasing youth participation in Paraguay has been to forge reciprocal links between different youth-initiated, youth-run activities and organizations at all levels. Through La Voz de los Jóvenes (Youth Voice Project), a joint project of CIRD and UNICEF, and Red Juventud de Paraguay, young people are gaining access to resources and skills as part

of a broader movement and not just as isolated and fragmented activities. The existence of the "Red" (network), through the facilitation of CIRD, was also evidence of links to research and public policy. However, this was still at its beginning phases.

Conclusions: Understanding Youth Participation

Conversations with young people and adults revealed much about the situation of youth participation in Paraguay. They also demonstrated that understanding youth participation requires asking the right questions — based on a nuanced understanding of local culture and history. Our hosts from CIRD helped us phrase our questions in ways that would give us the information we were seeking. For example, asking, "How did the March events affect your lives?" was too forward a question and would only serve to distance Paraguayan youth, who tend to be very private about their feelings. When, instead, we asked "Where were you during the March events?" the youths opened up and told us how those events affected their lives.

While young people may have been slow to share their feelings when talking with the ILG team, they were eager to talk about their experiences with other youth. In our meetings in Paraguay, we explained that we were there to learn about youth participation in Paraguay. We added that we wished to take back ideas to share with the youth we work with at home. The youth said they welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas with youth in the United States and Russia directly (i.e., without an adult filter.) They were enthusiastic about using e-mail as a way of facilitating such a youth dialogue.

The bottom-line message: Youth are central actors in the new Paraguay, and are ready to join with other young people creating change in their own countries. They will welcome the support of adults when offered, but are unlikely to wait for adults or take easily to those who would stand between them and other young people.

The Paraguay ILG team pauses for a group photo with their hosts during a site visit.

HOST ORGANIZATION:
CENTRO DE INFORMACIÓN Y RECURSOS PARA EL DESARROLLO
CENTER OF INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT (CIRD)

The Center for Information and Resources for Development (CIRD) was founded in 1988 as a resource and information center to connect members of the NGO community in Paraguay to one another, and to external funding sources. Today its principal focus continues to be network development, information sharing, capacity building and resource mobilization. CIRD's current program activities include Proyecto Marandú, a project combating drug abuse through the education of children, youth, parents and teachers and most recently through integrated development of children and youth. In addition, CIRD runs programs in legal reform, public education, decentralization of health services, and small enterprise development. Over the last couple of years, CIRD has led an effort to organize a national network of youth service organizations (called Red Juventud), and is now serving as its secretariat.

HOST TEAM

Yan Speranza, Junior Achievement Program, 31 years old, has a degree in Business administration, with a specialization in Marketing. A professor at the Catholic University of Asuncion, Yan founded the Junior Achievement program in Paraguay in 1996 and is the current director. Already 10,000 youth have participated in this program, which focuses on training, economic education and the development of young entrepreneurs. Yan was selected as the Outstanding Youth this year for her operation of this program.

Enrique Sanchez, Youths for Democracy Foundation, 31 years old, is an economist, professor of Economics and Social Reality at the Catholic University of Asunción and National University of Asunción. The Youths for Democracy Foundation is a coordinator of youth from political parties and the independent sector. It was the first to destroy the indifference of the citizens, calling for a mobilization on behalf of a political judgment for Cubas and jail for General Oviedo.

Fernando Camacho, Youths for Democracy Foundation, 30 years old, is an agricultural engineer. He is a political member of the National Encounter Party. He is a director of the Foundation who feels that politics plays a role in the search for a good community.

Ana Laura Rivarola, Youth Parliament, 19 years old, is a student in Marketing and Public Relations, and General Coordinator of the Youth Parliament. This organization was organized a few months before El Marzo de Paraguay. The majority of its members distinguish themselves through their intense activism on behalf of democracy.

Mariana Dos Santos, SUMANDO, 22 years old, is a psychology student at the Catholic University of Asunción. She is the Coordinator of the Youth Section of

continues . . .

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HOST TEAM, *continued*

the nonprofit agency SUMANDO. Mariana began working in the social area from 1990 to 1995 where she was an active member of the Volunteers Club of the International School of Asunción, where she attended high school. She worked on a variety of projects dealing with adult literacy and food and clothing drives. She is a member/founder of SEPA, Ecoforestry Services for Farmers, a nonprofit youth program dedicated to agricultural and forestry extension.

Marcos Prono, 24 years old, has a degree in Communication Sciences. He is the Coordinator of the Youth Department of Alianza, an organization where he has worked for three years. His department works within the agency's education intervention program to develop teachers, parents and students. They work with youth to promote personal development and leadership training.

Teofilo Aquino, Youth Table, 25 years old, is the founder of the Youth Table of Colonel Oviedo, Caaguazu Department. This Youth Table grew out of the youth development efforts of CIRD. Teofilo is a young activist who is dedicated to coordinating youth services, finding a space for youth development and the interaction of different groups of urban and rural youth.

Luis Benitz Villalobus, Asunción Municipality, 31 years old, is Director of the Youth Section of the Department of Children and Youth for the City of Asunción. She is Coordinator of the "Voice of Youth" program, which CIRD operates jointly with UNICEF.

Josefina Rios, Peace Corps, Paraguay, 45 years old, is a licensed Psychologist and Family Systems Therapist. She has been the Program Director for the Education and Youth Program of Body of Peace for three years. She has 15 years experience working for the YMCA in Paraguay.

Carlos Gauto (host), CIRD, 46 years old, Psychiatrist, M.D. specializes in drug addiction. Carlos has been the coordinator of the Child and Youth Division of CIRD since 1990. He has coordinated CIRD projects dealing with prevention of illicit drugs, as well as projects for OIT/IPEC dealing with child labor. Currently he is the coordinator of two projects dealing with youth development: an Interamerican Working Group on Youth Development and International Youth Foundation funded project to strengthen the Paraguayan Youth Network; and the Voices of Youth, supported by UNICEF. He has also undertaken research resulting in CIRD's latest study of toxic practices and sexuality in Paraguayan youth.

Carmen Gonzalez (host), 33 years old, is a specialist in graphic design. Carmen has been part of the CIRD staff since 1994, beginning her work in the Child and Youth Division documenting projects dealing with prevention of drug dependency. She has been involved since the inception with the Paraguay Association of NGOs and the Paraguay Youth Network.

Source: Information given here was provided by the host team at the time of the visit in 1999.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

VISION STATEMENT

YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Why, Who, What, When, Where and How

In addition to the specific background information that each team was given on the country and programs they visited, all teams were provided with a site visit tool kit built around some common questions.[11] While teams were encouraged to look for the examples and insights specific to each country context, the common set of questions — based on the basic reporter questions of who, what, where, when, how, and why — allowed for cross-team conversations and comparisons when the group came together to meet as a whole in Caracas. ILG members responses to these questions can be seen throughout the country team reports, whether addressing them specifically, as did the Venezuela team, or using them as an implied outline, as did Paraguay.

The Ecuador team took a slightly different tack. While grounding their responses in the reality of what they saw, the team took the assignment a step further. Their intensive late night efforts to define and shape responses resulted in what is essentially a vision statement for youth participation and engagement in community and society. As the principles and philosophy that they set forth echoed the words and thoughts of many ILG members, we include their reflections here in full.

WHY?

What reasons are given for young people to take an active role in development processes? What are the expectations that adults, programs, communities and the broader society have for the roles that young people should play and why they should play them? What outcomes are anticipated? How are community outcomes balanced with youth outcomes?

Context and Vision

Because the actions of the government and other sectors of society are insufficient, there is a void that is being filled by Ecuadorian youth who are taking up the

[11] *Pathways for Youth Participation In Community and Society: Site Visit Questions and Tools*, includes an overview as well as framing pictures that accompany most questions. This tool kit is available in both English and Spanish and can be found online at www.forumforyouthinvestment.org. For summary list of questions, see "Framing Site Visit Questions," page 24.

YOUNG PEOPLE USE CREATIVE "DINAMICAS" (DYNAMICS) TO TAKE UP THE MANTEL OF COMMUNITY CHANGE

Organizations such as Fundación Esquel and, in particular, Cefocine, a youth-based organization, are working toward a new renaissance for their communities. In Juán Montalvo, Cefocine engaged children and youth in productive creative experiences (dubbed "dynamics") such as video and drama production as an alternative to gang activities and influences. Such outlets gave community members positive ways to express themselves. For example, ILG members were visibly moved by the young people's willingness to share the difficult details of their lives by performing a play illustrating the activities of local gangs.

mantle of community change. These youth are fundamentally involved in capacity building and systemic change in order to create a new renaissance for their community and society. This change is based on building a political, social and economic infrastructure that will support a healthy, productive and progressively educated population.

Youth participation is critical for four reasons:

1. Youth are an important part in changing communities and society now and into the future because they bring in new thoughts and ideas which are the seeds of change. Because youth are involved in their communities, because they understand the technology of the twenty-first century, because they are not afraid to take risks, and because youth act with a collective spirit, they are the greatest assets of a community.
2. Engaging youth in positive actions is an effective means to counter and redirect negative actions (such as gang violence and drug abuse) that harm both youth and the communities in which they live. When youth are poorly educated and are denied fundamental rights, they often protest in unconstructive ways. Vehicles are needed to help youth to shift from *protesting* to *proposing*.
3. Youth are people and, as such, have a fundamental rights to contribute to their society.
4. More research is needed to understand the relationship between community outcomes and youth outcomes, and to better understand the proper balance between them. Nevertheless, the fact that a symbiotic relationship exists is undeniable. Youth are a critical part of the infrastructure of a community, and communities are a critical context in which youth grow.

WHO?

Which young people are taking action? Young men? Young women? Urban youth? Rural youth? What ages (older/younger youth)? What ethnicity? What religions? What skills/experiences/degrees/prerequisites? Which peers and adults do the young people work with?

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BUILDING REPRESENTATIVE YOUTH VOICE

The National Youth Forum consists of more than 70 young people representing urban and rural areas, public and private schools, religious organizations and other youth-based organizations.

In the community of Julio Cartageña, local children work with the Cefocine youth on arts-based workshops. Additionally, Cefocine works alongside the mothers teaching them basic handicraft skills in order for them to generate additional income and establish a small business cooperative.

All Youth Should Be Encouraged to Take Action

Youth from all sectors of society, all heritages, all geographic areas, all religions. The principle of youth action should be applied without prejudice or discrimination. In Ecuador, improving the current situation is imperative for everyone, both rich and poor. Children of all ages, young adolescents, older youth and young parents should be encouraged to contribute. All youth have interests that can be built upon, motivating them to take action.

WHERE?

In what spaces are young people playing active roles as agents of change — the spaces where they live? learn? work? play? In what domains of community and civic life are youth working to make a difference?

The Importance of Physical Space

Youth should have a space of their own within the neighborhoods in which they live. Having a sense of ownership over a common space is critical to the development of youth and their ability to contribute to their communities.

However, youth must not be marginalized inside of the four walls of a "youth space." Instead, a youth space should be seen as the base to be used for launching into all the realms of a community. The physical space should be there for recreation, brainstorming, organizing and preparing to take action in their communities, and for reflecting upon the actions they have taken.

Youth participation must be supported in the areas where they naturally congregate on their own. Different youth congregate in different areas. No one space is appropriate for all youth; all spaces where

ECUADORIAN YOUNG PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL SPACE

Realizing the importance of having a space of their own, the youth in Julio Cartageña cooperated with Cefocine to refurbish an existing building and convert it to an active youth center. And since space is important to adults as well as youth, Cefocine worked with a group of women in Cartageña who had begun a handicraft enterprise, and helped them move from the corner of one person's house to a larger community hall.

youth groups or subgroups meet are critical areas for development.

Youth participation should be supported in the spaces where they live, learn, work, play, share, celebrate and develop their talents and creativities.

Youth should have opportunities to contribute within their own neighborhoods as well as in others.

The Importance of Contributing to the Full Range of Community Development Activities

Youth efforts within community should begin by strengthening families, by strengthening communities' relationships and by increasing the self-expression of individuals as a base of other community building and development efforts.

What other types of community development should youth support?

- Ownership — increasing a community's sense of ownership over efforts and sense of belonging within a culture;
- Spiritual change — giving a sense of meaning, hope and dreams;
- Artistic creation and expressiveness;
- Political education and understanding — how to access resources, form councils, lobby and advocate;
- Education — in the holistic sense, incorporating both formal and informal education;
- Health and human services;
- Physical development — housing and infrastructure; and
- Economic development.

Key Points About the Domains of Community Development

- All of the domains of community building are interwoven.
- These domains represent the things that allow youth and adults to remain within a community and the culture.
- It is important to have all of these domains open enough that different people with different interests and talents can come to understand how they can contribute to the community.

SUPPORTING A RELOCATED COMMUNITY

In the Baition Popular project, an entire rural community was relocated after the El Niño disaster. The community built a school for the children. Simple houses are being built for families. Additionally, a workshop is being established for adolescents and parents to teach various technical skills such as welding, sewing and soy milk production.

When?

Young people as change agents at what ages? What times during the day — school hours, after school hours, days, nights? What times during the week — weekdays, weekends? What times during the year — summers, year-round? What periods or stages of life — between school and work? Before starting a family?

Early and Sustained

Efforts to support children must begin when they are young. Addressing young children is a viable strategy for preventing future problems. However, it is critical to sustain efforts through young adulthood. It is clear that early action can yield significant gains, yet it is also clear that there is no way to satisfactorily "inoculate" young people so that they can navigate adolescence and young adulthood without ongoing assistance. The impetus to begin efforts early must be balanced with the impetus to sustain efforts for older youth. If we are to be successful, we must deal with all ages of youth. Twenty percent is not enough, and 40 percent is not enough — it must be all youth.

Building Long-term Commitment of Youth

If our goal is life-long action, then we have to work with youth in such a way that community action becomes the essence of people's mission and their lives.

How?

Engaging Young People

What strategies are used to increase and deepen youth participation? Do efforts attempt to increase young people's motivation and capacity to contribute, and their opportunities to do so? Do they focus on other elements? Are the elements sequential or interwoven? Are they linked together in the minds of young people? What resources and relationships are provided to support efforts? Are these clearly identifiable? Do they form paths in the way that one can see and follow career paths? Are there clear pathways?

Working With All Ages

In nearly all instances, Cefocine makes the children the point of entry for the program in each community. Working with young children gives them the credibity to work with other populations, and have success where other (adult-led) interventions have failed. In Cartagena, Cefocine called a group of mothers together to a meeting to discuss creating a microenterprise. These mothers did not know each other, and they were rather nervous about the prospect. However, because they had seen the good work Cefocine had been doing with their children, they trusted them, came to the meeting, and began taking the first few steps. The group has since emerged into a strong, supportive, connected group of women ready to roll out their first products (handmade dolls) in time for the Christmas season.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Elements of Effective Efforts to Engage Youth in Community Action

Engaging young people in community action is a complex and multifaceted task. We identified 13 critical components:

1. capacity building;
2. mobilizing for concrete change (all projects were organizing community and organizations based on accomplishments of specific goals and objectives);
3. leadership development;
4. political education;
5. alternative models of education;
6. developing and organizational infrastructure;
7. skill development;
8. creating and supporting small enterprise initiatives;
9. allowing youth to develop their own programs and providing space for their initiatives;
10. encouraging them to take responsibility for their environment;
11. facilitating creative opportunities for the self-expression of young people within their communities (dynamics, video);
12. raising youth consciousness about the seriousness of the issues and their potential to address them; and
13. relationship building.

DINAMICAS

Cefocine youth referred to the creating of "dynamics" with young people. This amorphous word seemed to capture such meanings as group cohesion, group self-esteem, group self-expression and the creative arts.

PATHWAYS TO YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Cefocine provides funds for small youth-driven business initiatives, including a motor vehicle repair shop and a courier postal delivery service.

Expectations Need to Be Created and Nurtured

There must be expectations among both youth and adults that young people should:

- have space within their community;
- have a sense of belonging; and
- be expected to contribute.

Pathways Must Be Developed

Pathways must begin with youth themselves. They must begin by unleashing the visions within youth themselves, by creating ownership, and by allowing youth to create their own models. A fertile culture must be created where youth action will flourish.

There are three essential interwoven elements of pathways:

- capacity building;
- sustainable ownership; and
- enthusiasm.

HOW?

Influencing Context

What strategies are used to create expectations and pathways? What are the building blocks to change? On which levels is change being effected? Who is being engaged to make change happen? Youth? Parents? Practitioners? Researchers? Pollsters? Media? Philanthropic organizations? Policy makers?

Principles

- All levels of action must be addressed, from working with individual young people to building national platforms. All levels of change are essential — failure to address any "building block" threatens the integrity of the whole.
- Within each level of action, there should be a focus on youth-led efforts to make a difference.

This was clearly illustrated by the work of Cefocine in different communities in villages as well as Esquel and the National Youth Forum, which has local and national impact respectively.

The Levels/Building Blocks of Change

Change must be effected on all of the following levels:

- Work with individual young people one on one — especially youth trying to make a difference.
- Support the families young people live in.
- Support youth organizations — especially youth-led organizations committed to making a difference.
- Develop the communities that youth live in — especially youth-led efforts to address one or more of the full range of community building and development needs.
- Support capacity building efforts — especially youth-led efforts to increase the capacity of youth leadership organizations.
- Support data collection, documentation and evaluation of what exists and what works for youth — especially youth-led efforts.
- Support networks — especially youth-led networks of youth leadership organizations.
- Support communication strategies — especially youth-led strategies to influence messages disseminated by the media and others.
- Support the creation of a national youth platform which can address larger issues such as public policies, public opinion and research.

SECTION III

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE ILG EXPERIMENT

In pursuing the ILG's learning agenda, certain strategies proved to be markedly more successful. There is no doubt that the Latin American experience was by far the most successful learning component of the project. For many ILG members, the trip was the learning group — what came before was preparation, what followed was wrap up. For the Forum staff, all three periods were instructive. Collectively, they have taught us several critical lessons. We share them here in the hopes that others can avoid our mistakes and better understand the results that have emerged from the ILG.

LESSON 1

Opportunities for Powerful Reflective Learning Do *Have An Impact*

It took an enormous amount of work to organize simultaneous visits to five different Latin American countries that brought in groups of four to seven people from all over the world. But the intensity of these small, structured three-day experiences created lasting bonds and allowed for a depth of experience that is rarely achieved in conferences and half-day tours. Even though they had never met before, members really had vivid learning experiences to share when they came together for the joint meeting in Caracas.

ILG members' statements illustrate what they found most important.

The opportunity to share views and meet other activists working with youth. From the Latin America trip I had an opportunity to see young people from a different but nevertheless similar cultural and economic milieu contributing to community development. In particular the level of political consciousness was impressive.

— Bolaji Owasanoye, Nigeria

The ability to have quality time, site visits, discussions and reflections with people having a range of perspectives and experiences broadened and deepened my understanding of historic, cultural and development differences and commonalities in approaches to community youth development. The ability to observe and interact with

people in Venezuela with the same team and then process the experience through our own and then a collective lens was invaluable in connecting theory to practice. Being able to do this with our Latin American neighbors not only opened me to new ways of thinking and working (the site visits) but also exposed me to threads of history and culture that have influenced community development in the United States. Since I have heard often that developing countries naturally have a community youth development approach, it was enlightening to see this firsthand...very affirming of the work we've been doing.

— Della Hughes, United States

It helped to understand commonalities in approaches to youth development, as well as begin to think about contextual differences that, in turn, began to assist in reviewing assumptions about practice.

Example of a common theme: Youth present, not future.

Contextual difference example: Emerging participatory democracy seems to support youth involvement/participation and integration with community development more so than a long-standing democratic government (as exist in Uruguay and the United States).

— Ron Register, United States

Examples from other countries encouraged me to rethink critically the assumptions I made and how to organize plans and programs in the future.

— Matthew Wexler, United States

LESSON 2

Powerful Individual Experiences Can *Lead to Lasting Changes in Practices*

This was not the case for every member. But there were members whose basic beliefs about their goals and practices were altered permanently. Some of these individual changes derived from experiences in Latin America, observing alternative models and paradigms in action. Other changes in practice and thinking arose once individuals returned home and initiated mini-projects funded through the ILG. But listening to ILG members describe these personal and professional transformations reveals a common theme: Connecting youth development and community development consistently involves new ways of thinking about young people as active participants and full community members. Youth engagement is, in fact, the most powerful lever for effective work that combines youth development and community development.

The ILG had an impact on how we do our work and how we think about our work. It impacted how we organized our thinking and strategies based on conceptual models. One of the most valuable things was the sharing of research and analysis that focused on youth and community development....We organized a youth meeting (as our mini-project) and it was within that meeting that the youth decided to create a Oaxaca Youth Forum. It has grown from 15 youth groups in 1999 to

58 presently. We learned how to engage young people and youth groups and not focus on financial resources, but on the resources of youth themselves and their community.

— Francisco Gerdes, Oaxaca

In Egypt, there are a number of people working on youth issues, working on community development issues, and also working on the intersection. Through the ILG, I did a small project here to identify the activities that were going on and to bring them together in a workshop to discuss issues of youth development in Egypt and community development in Egypt. From that initiative, a group of young leaders- — young people from youth organizations and community development organizations — got together....As a result of this mini-project, there's now a sustained group of young people working in youth groups and community development organizations coming together on a sustained basis to really get that field of work attention here in Egypt.

— Bas Auer, Egypt

When I went to Latin America, I learned some strategies for development using a youth participatory approach and involving the youth and the community. To do community development work we have to think about the individual growth and skill-building of the young people themselves, and this individual growth should be balanced with the institution building and community change. This is something that I learned from the [ILG] members — strategies about community development by trying to involve the youth and the community (by which I mean adults) to work together...to create some sort of community action, to change difficulties that we have in society...to create an impact on health....I learned a lot and used a lot...the strategies have had a big impact on the focus of my work now — using the youth, family and community participatory approach. For the work I am doing with the support of the Ford Foundation in Vietnam, I used the youth and community participatory approach — youth adult partnerships, youth capacity building and creating supportive environments. The strategies have become one of the main focuses of my work.

— Warunee Fongkaew, Thailand

LESSON 3

Powerful Individual Experiences Neither Require Nor Inspire Joint Learning Experiences

Our charge, as we created the ILG, was to:

- coordinate structured opportunities for engaged doers and thinkers to create, share, critique and apply research, theory, policies and practices that promote the goal of youth engagement in community development; and
- create an expanding network of individuals and organizations committed to promoting young people as change agents.

This proved to be much more difficult than we expected. We scheduled the full group meeting to be the midpoint rather than the beginning of the 18-month period, reasoning that the group could use

the first 7–8 months to work online and that some would develop small projects that they would share when convened. Projects were done. There was sporadic engagement around specific questions and queries. But for the first seven months ILG members were connected to Forum staff, not to each other.

We attempted to compensate for this by blending small group and full group experiences together into the week-long Latin American visit. As noted, this created powerful learning and some strong bonds between members. But these were not strong enough to keep the group together once the visit ended. Initial commitment levels were high, but two months post-visit, communication had largely returned to the hub and spoke model with Forum staff pressing for contact at the same level as they did before. (Some direct connections contintued to be made, for example, between ILG members in the United States, Africa and Latin America.

LESSON 4

Too Much Breadth and Flexibility Makes It Difficult for a Newly Formed Group to Gain Traction

ILG members were selected through a nomination process that cast an intentionally broad net. As noted, members were invited to join the ILG through one of four routes: (a) they were Ford Foundation community youth development grantees; (b) they were recommended by a Ford Foundation international office; (c) they were recommended by an International Youth Foundation country partner; or (d) they were a part of a national organization that focused on community development or community building rather than youth development.

Everyone in the group was deeply committed to improving the power and reach of their organization's work with young people. Every member saw community engagement as a key part of that work. But, as the individual profiles make clear (see Appendix), the members' interests ranged from reproductive health to housing construction to entrepreneurship. More important, however, were the variations in the direction of members' work. Some were working to get communities more involved in supporting youth, others to get young people more involved in supporting their communities, and still others were trying to find the balance.

This variation in member backgrounds and approaches would have been an asset if the group had been convened around a clearly defined topic and charged with a few concrete tasks. Mid-course corrections attempted to narrow the scope and sharpen the task focus. But this was not the original design. As a topic, youth and community development is like a Rorschach test — each member saw something different and brought their own interpretations to the table.

The commitments implied in the ILG name were important: to bring *international* perspectives into U.S. discussions; to create practitioner *learning groups* to identify, codify and disseminate information and knowledge; to explore expectations and strategies for supporting *youth and community development*. But the proposi-

tion was that these commitments were best executed through investment in a single, closed practitioner learning group.

Practically, one of the most powerful lessons we learned from the ILG experiment is that these strategies lose power when too closely bundled. International perspectives need to be identified more broadly and infused more specifically. Learning groups (plural) need to be created for specific tasks, not just for the broad sake of learning. Topics under the broad umbrella term "youth and community development" need to be defined more narrowly in order to be explored more deeply.

It is never easy to say that things did not work as well as desired. Had the Forum's role remained focused on stimulating interaction within the ILG, we would say this with a heavy heart. But our role with the ILG group shifted over time from coordinator, to facilitator, to planner, to group leader, to issue mover. As we tried new strategies to engage the group, we simultaneously stepped up our efforts to engage others outside the group in order to achieve the bottom-line goal — increasing the synthesis and dissemination of information that can inform practice. This volume, plus the other volumes in the Community & Youth Development Series and the *International Insights* series in the *CYD Journal*, reflect our commitment to edit, collect and synthesize research and practice-based knowledge for practitioners and planners.

Appendix

Members of the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development

ILG members represented a wide range of professional disciplines, issues areas, organizational affiliations and countries. We provide brief snapshots of their work here. Due to the limitations of space, we have given fuller treatment to the profiles of international members than to their U.S. counterparts. Most of the U.S. ILG members and their organizations are well known and easily researched on the Web. If you would like further information on how to contact any of the individuals listed here, please do not hesitate to contact the Forum.

International Members: Individual Sketches

Bas Auer
Egypt

There is a need for young people to do their own thing . . . the adult partnership should be in terms of adults recognizing that they should get out of the way.

Bas Auer became involved with youth issues at university when he joined a student group that was part of an international network of youth organizations. After working as a youth advisor to the United Nations Environment Program and secretary general of Youth for Development and Cooperation (YDC), an international organization of youth activists, he became an Egypt-based Middle East program advisor for YDC. Over time, his work has shifted from being a youth organizer to managing youth activities and giving youth the skills and support they need to better ensure their activism and involvement in the community is effective and sustainable.

Auer sees youth development as the process by which a young person reaches his or her intellectual, emotional and practical potential and maturity — a belief strengthened and refined through his involvement in the ILG. While he mostly hears young people talked about in terms of the problems they face, such as unemployment, he supports a more

expansive view where youth programs shift from simply delivering services to youth to encouraging and supporting their participation as well.

But Auer recognizes that his youth development approach encounters resistance from a number of forces inside Egypt. Young people's desire to express themselves and create new ways to get involved in Egyptian society is often constrained by "a general consensus around what a responsible adult is and is not," Auer says. The state of the country's education system is another pressing concern. In addition to severe funding shortages and overcrowded classrooms, Auer believed schools are more concerned about students learning theory and passing examinations than in developing practical skills that can help them find jobs. "[The education system] doesn't prepare [students] to become independent thinking citizens that are ready to function independently and contribute to their community."

But Auer recognizes that there are bright spots, as well. While there are few opportunities for out-of-school learning such as sports clubs and youth associations, Egypt has a number of government-sponsored community youth centers with the potential to play a beneficial role in youth's lives. Unfortunately, many of the centers are underfunded and lacked appropriate programs and services.

Through the ILG, Bas had the opportunity to reflect on and respond to these aspects of the Egyptian context, both positive and negative. For Auer, the site visit to Latin America was a chance to better understand youth and community development frameworks. "I learned a lot in terms of structurally thinking about youth development, and what is youth development, and where it intersects with development in the community," said Auer. An important discovery during the trip was the apparent disconnect between American-based international networks and European-based international networks.

Building on these lessons and the support provided by the ILG, Auer used a youth development lens to map the status of youth in Egypt -- creating a clear and powerful composite picture of how the country's young people are fairing. The high notes of this analysis are captured in "Identifying Positive Outcomes in Egypt," featured in the Fall 2000 issue of *CYD Journal* and the December 2000 reprint of *International Insights*.

The ILG also supported Auer's efforts to reverse one of the greatest challenges to youth and community development in Egypt: fragmentation. Through his ILG-sponsored mini-project, Auer brought together young people and adults from across the country for a workshop aimed to build the connections among youth and community development organizations. With the help of U.S. ILG member Greg Taylor and former Forum staff member Steve Mokwena, who traveled to Egypt for the workshop, Auer and the workshop participants developed a blueprint for a national network of young people doing community development work. The network draws on a model shared by Greg Taylor, a home-grown approach developed by Community Impact! in the United States. This network-building model, stories of Egyptian young people interviewed by Steve Mokwena, and reflections on the workshop are included in the aforementioned issue of *International Insights*.

For Auer, this network is the most important result of his involvement in the ILG. "I'm very proud that, as a result of this mini-project, there's now a sustained group of young people working in youth groups and community development organizations coming together on a sustained basis to really get that field of work attention here in Egypt."

Pedro Bellen
The Philippines

The answer lies in helping youth to take up roles of responsibility, making them feel accepted and respected by their communities.

Pedro Bellen has been designing and implementing youth skills training programs for the past 12 years. He currently works for the Entrepreneurial and Livelihood Training Center, an NGO that supports other non-governmental organizations and "people" organizations, groups Bellen defines as small informal organizations such as U.S.-style block clubs, that help young people become entrepreneurs. Bellen says that in the first six years of his work with youth, he did not recognize the need to involve the community. He now sees community development as an important vehicle for youth development. He states that "Youth development has to involve the community where the youth are located."

According to Bellen, the church does a lot of work promoting values to youth. While the government has a national youth commission, he describes other youth programs as "superficial." He believes the business community is playing an increasingly important role in supporting programs for youth.

However, Bellen says that young Filipinos are given mixed and often contradictory signals from their family, church and government about their roles and responsibilities in society. On the one hand, youth are taught to be socially responsible and socially active from an early age. On the other hand, Bellen believes young people are often exploited by the political establishment, leaving them feeling used. In addition, in poor communities especially, young people are often forced to work and become the family's breadwinner, accelerating their need to assume adult responsibilities.

Bellen also believes that the heavy expectations on youth are not balanced by adequate social supports and guidance, resulting in high rates of dissatisfaction and rebellion. He believes young people often turn to early marriages, drugs, political extremism and other harmful behavior as a means of escape.

"The main program focus is not economic viability for young people, we need to recognize the need to address the social problems of youth using economic entry." He sees his work helping young people establish their own businesses as an important step to helping them become independent and a positive force in their communities.

Marilyn de Castro
The Philippines

My vision: Helping communities and youth organize and participate to be able to asses their situation, identify their needs and resources to achieve a dream and vision which will be achieved by acting and mobilizing resources to be evaluated in partnerships

with stakeholders for policy and community support.

Marilyn de Castro is executive director of the Baguio Center for Young Adults, a youth empowerment and development resource center working with adolescents on issues ranging from sexuality and reproductive health to life skills training and gender and children's rights awareness.

De Castro sees community development as the process by which people identify their needs and involve the wider community in finding resources and solutions to meet them. She sees youth development as young people going through a similar experience of assessing problems and finding solutions in their own lives.

De Castro cites the high rate of premarital sex among youth and says that youth as young as 13 get married in the Philippines. Schools and communities resisted the Center's early sex education programs. However, the addition of broader life planning instruction tempered their concerns. De Castro's program helps young people more fully understand their lives and develop a healthy self-esteem to prepare them for active roles in their communities. In addition, she has created development projects in villages that have facilitated stronger connections between adults and youth.

Creating a vision is a major portion of de Castro's work. Visioning is "a process that emphasizes the need for participants to go back to reality and see problems and prioritize issues and concerns based on resources and abilities." It is necessary that the community has a vision, and de Castro and her organization provide training in this area. Before young people can be integrated into this process, de Castro believes that they need to be equipped and empowered. "We believe that young people need to clarify themselves to be fully useful in the community." According to de Castro, a vital part of this is building young people's self-esteem, character, foundation for values, decision-making skills, and goal settings. Only then will young people have a founded self with which they can be actively involved in the community.

While she believes her programs have been effective, she would like to have the opportunity to more formally assess their evolution and effectiveness.

Barry Cullen/Louise Hurley
Ireland

The alliances needed for the future are not going to be found locally — there is a need for new relationships on how to cross boundaries between disciplines and geography.

Barry Cullen has more than 20 years of field research and management experience in community development and social services. He currently serves as executive director of the Children's Research Center at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. The Center was created to give Trinity College an opportunity to have a meaningful role in Dublin's social development. The Center stresses applied research that has practical applications in the community, focusing primarily on exploring outcomes for youth living in disadvantaged communities and the factors that create those outcomes.

Cullen believes community development involves mobilizing the community to address development challenges. He notes, however, that community development in Ireland is not strictly connected to economic development. He believes youth

development has a clearer focus: "Youth development is talking about a group," Cullen says. "It attempts to engage young people within their own situation and involve them in the process of development that would have them respond to their own problems in ways that enable them to have a meaningful role."

In Ireland, Cullen says there are two schools of thought on youth development. The first has more of a community development focus, mobilizing young people to respond to community issues. The second focuses more on developing the capacity of young people to become good citizens. However, the latter does not necessarily focus on specific challenges in the community.

The residents of the community are the main drivers behind youth and community development activities. While the Church is a strong institution in Ireland, Cullen believes it has been difficult to draw religious groups into activities. In addition, the business community's participation varies. He believes it is more difficult to engage business in large urban areas, although he notes that business leaders and larger companies are showing a growing interest in community involvement and philanthropy.

One of the challenges he sees for youth development in Ireland is creating a network of capacity-building organizations to help youth development organizations and practitioners refine and improve their work, similar to organizations targeting community development efforts.

Unfortunately, Mr. Cullen was not able to participate in the ILG Latin America study tour. Louise Hurley, who was assistant program director of the Children's Research Center, participated instead. Originally trained as a primary school teacher, Hurley has over 15 years experience as an administrator, policy developer, researcher and manager. She has explored youth issues such as suicide, teenage pregnancy, juvenile justice and drug abuse.

Warunee Fongkaew
Thailand

That's why I want to play my role as the one who tries to be the creator of a youth movement . . . .

Warunee Fongkaew is currently an Assistant Professor for the Department of Medical Nursing at the Chiang Mai University in Thailand. Dr. Fongkaew's research interests include HIV/AIDS prevention and care; health promotion in adolescents and adults; reproductive health, gender and sexuality; and infection control in medical units. In addition, she writes a regular column for the local newspaper, "Only Understanding," that helps parents better understand the issues in their children's lives.

Fongkaew says youth development means giving young people the opportunity to learn, and says community development is about engaging the community in identifying key issues and developing strategies to address them.

Her work focuses on building young people's life skills to prepare them to play an active role in their community — especially leadership on public health issues. "We believe that peer leaders need to know who they are before they concentrate on building their future."

With the enormous challenge of HIV/AIDS and sexual exploitation in Thailand, Fongkaew is involved with the

Urban Life Network Project, a health program targeting adolescents, teachers and migrant workers. In large part because of lessons learned through the ILG, she has begun to increasingly involve families and the community in her work with youth. "We recognize that we cannot work only with youth — their family and community need to participate and listen to the problems," Fongkaew said. "They need to hear what young people want from their parents. [Young people] need to know that there are adults who care."

As Fongkaew works with youth one-on-one, she also strives to create networks of youth working on health issues. In this spirit, she supports more than 25 youth trainers who run sexual and reproductive health workshops. Other projects in which she has engaged have trained hundreds of youth peer leaders.

In addition to working with youth, Fongkaew believes that more resources need to be available to help parents understand and get involved in their children's lives. Again drawing on lessons from the ILG, Fongkaew has focused increased attention on engaging parents in her work. "Parents don't know how to play a positive role. [They] are struggling to keep up with the changing society and need to know how to communicate with their children . . . ."

For Fongkaew, the main benefit of ILG membership was participation in the Latin American trip; this was the source of most of the lessons she gleaned from the ILG. It is clear that this experience shapes and informs much of the work in which Fongkaew is currently engaged. Exposure to new ways of thinking about youth and community, largely through conversations with other ILG members, led her to make youth, family and community participation a centerpiece of her health-focused work. The trip also provided Fongkaew concrete techniques and models for actualizing this commitment to participation. Perhaps most powerfully, her experiences in Latin America helped her recognize the sense of ownership and empowerment that already exists in many of Thailand's communities — and motivated her to consider taking new steps to strengthen community ownership and empowerment.

Francisco Gerdes
Oaxaca, Mexico

My vision: To enable the existing commitment, talent and community spirit of rural youth to contribute to the construction of a more just, sustainable and inclusive society.

Francisco Gerdes was born in Mexico, and is a graduate of Boston University, holding a B.A. in Philosophy and an M.A. in Economic Policy for Developing Countries. Gerdes has served in a variety of capacities including working with street children in Brazil, serving as a government advisor on industrial issues, and general manager of a technology firm. Francisco Gerdes is the founding Executive Director of Milpas de Oaxaca, an organization that works as a partner with organized villager groups from the poorest rural communities in the state of Oaxaca, simultaneously promoting good health, conservation of the environment and agricultural improvement. Presently, Gerdes identifies his mission as supporting youth and their projects and supporting the self-initiative of young people. Gerdes also worked as a part of the original team that started the Fundación Comunitaria de Oaxaca, IYF's Oaxacan partner.

Gerdes cites the Catholic Church's work with youth as an important catalyst for developing future activists. He says people who participated in youth activities sponsored by the Catholic Church in the 1980s created many of the more effective nonprofit organizations in the state today. "In the 1980s, the Catholic Church was focused on creating social awareness among young people and building values of community responsibility and being engaged."

However, the Church did not create enough spaces for young people to interact with others interested in helping their communities, and failed to create opportunities for them to get involved before they became adults. In an effort to fill this void, Gerdes and his organization held a youth meeting as part of his ILG-sponsored mini-project. It was within this meeting, that the youth created the Oaxacan Youth Forum, to which he points as evidence of the impact of his work. Since its creation in 1999, the Oaxacan Youth Forum has grown from 15 to 58 youth groups. The youth are trained on topics ranging from strategic planning and accounting to conflict resolution and stakeholder involvement. In addition, there is a Web site, newspaper and other communications tools for youth.

Gerdes and his organization serve as a key actor in supporting the youth in this state network, by providing technical assistance and links to adults, as they engage in addressing and trying to change public policy regarding the environment. Gerdes credits the ILG with the vision to create these youth-adult linkages. A large component of the training that he and his organization provide for youth includes training on how to link with local community authorities, how to link with schools, and how to link with significant adults who can support them. Gerdes believes that this is a major challenge in traditional communities, but therefore most important. Through linking with the adults in the community, the youth will be seen as part of the Oaxacan community and linked to the community structures.

In addition to creating youth-adult linkages, Gerdes learned many significant lessons from the ILG that have shaped his work since. He identifies building linkages between conceptual models for youth and community development as a major contributor to making his work stronger and more relevant to others. "It [the ILG] has taught me to systematize my work and build models to share with other organizations, as well as enabled us to define our strategies better by creating supports and opportunities. It also helped build awareness and gave us tools to interpret our reality."

Anton Lopukhin
Russia

There is no word in the Russian language for community.

Anton Lopukhin is executive director and a founder of the Association of Young Leaders, a student-led organization developing Russia's civil society by giving young people an awareness of and skills for civic participation. The Association of Young Leaders (AYL) focuses its work on peer education training, youth leadership and democracy training, and youth community service. Using more than 200 youth instructors, they have trained more than 5,000 youth across Russia and Kazakhstan. AYL is also working with governmental authorities and schools to create

student government associations. Their community service day mobilized more than 2,000 young people in community projects across the country.

However, in the initial stages of his work in youth and community development, language created many challenges. Lopukhin says that there is no word for community in Russian, making it even more difficult for people to understand the principles behind concepts such as community development, community building and community service. He recounted his own troubles when introduced to these words during a trip to the United States: "I recently spent a week at the Corporation for National Service in Washington, D.C., and they used the term "community service" but I didn't understand what she was saying because this term doesn't exist in Russia. Once it was defined I understood the meaning . . . ."

He believes young people are more willing to embraces these ideas. "We work with youth because we recognize that they are a real resource for community redefinition and change," Lopukhin said. "They are flexible, they move fast and they don't stick to the old communist ways."

Lopukhin says there is a great need to find constructive activities for Russia's youth. He says that only about five percent of young people participate in some form of structured activity. While there are a small number of youth organizations across the country, there are no formal networks according to Lopukhin, and he is not aware of any organizations that specifically address youth development. In addition, he notes that the previous Russian government abolished the Ministry of Youth.

When asked what he would like adults to understand about young people's involvement in youth and community development, he says, "People need to know that they can solve many of their own problems and they need to know that youth can be a main power in [problem solving]. They need to know that youth don't have to be a part of the problem."

For Lopukhin, the ILG was most helpful in that he was able to interact with people who have similar experiences but are looking at different solutions. His experience in Paraguay gave him an appreciation for the advances in Russia and inspired him to take on his work more forcefully. As a part of this, Lopukhin and his organization took on a mini-project in association with the California Association of Student Councils, an organization with which he had a long history. Through this project, they produced written materials, which documented the history of the common work of AYL and CASC. This project proved very useful for Lopukhin and his organization as he states that the ability to look back and document one's history is essential to working toward a future.

Bene Madunagu
Nigeria

Girls make a difference.

A biologist by training, Bene Madunagu is cofounder of the feminist organization Women in Nigeria.

Madunagu believes that youth development is about acknowledging that young people have the intellectual capacity to articulate their needs and solve problems if given the responsibility and opportunity to act for themselves. However, she

believes young people are not allowed to play active roles in their communities, and lines of communication between young and old are often strained. "Young people are not seen as being able to make a contribution. People think that they have to tell young people to do this or that.... There is a huge problem with getting people to respect each other's views."

In addition, Madunagu has found that young people are not considered adults and given the authority to act independently until they are married or have children. "Young people, even up to the age of 30, as long as they still live with their parents, guardians or even grandparents, are regarded as 'not yet ripe to be able to think,'" she notes. Many want to have children or get married early to earn adult status in the community.

While addressing general youth and community development issues is important, Madunagu believes gender deserves particular attention. "I live in a society where we can't just talk about 'youth' because of the discrimination against girls from birth," says Madunagu, "Girls are not expected to be involved in things except just doing what they are asked to do."

With this in mind, Madunagu created the Girl's Power Initiative. Starting with just nine girls in 1994, Madunagu and Girl's Power's philosophy is that young women will be empowered if they understand their rights and feel in control of their lives. The program involves a comprehensive three-year gender-based curriculum: The first year focuses on personal empowerment, while the second year addresses sexual health and reproductive issues, and the third year concentrates on gender and feminism. The young women are also taught to be peer educators and are expected to participate in community service activities. Graduates of the program have gone on to form their own groups and share what they have learned with other women.

Madunagu learned several lessons from field visits during the ILG Latin America trip. Young people's involvement in the political process in Ecuador and Venezuela exposed her to the ways young people can direct their activism from protesting problems to proposing solutions. The youth work in communities with a heavy gang influence showed her techniques to move young people toward more positive activities. Finally, she thinks the experience of young people using video to initiate economic empowerment programs for women in Cefocine might be transferred to her work in Nigeria.

Jenny Nicholls
Australia

Community development is about community and young people working together — not as tokens — but youth being involved from grassroots level and then right on through.

Jenny Nicholls has worked in the area of youth arts and culture for more than 10 years, and can tell first hand of the difference that the arts has made in the lives of young people. Nicholls has been involved in grass-roots organizations, particularly youth theatre, as a writer, teacher, and director, having run a youth theatre company with youth 16-24 years old. Through her work she has provided opportunities for young people to create original and often liberating theatrical works that reflected issues and concerns relevant to their lives.

After her years in direct service, Nicholls moved on to work with the Australian Youth Foundation. Her main role was to help the AYF to fund innovative programs that would allow young people to continue to work in the arts, looking at the arts as a way of building up young peoples' involvement within the community. She also functioned as a board member, and was responsible for creating a Youth and Community Cultural Grants program that encouraged young people to work with community organizations in the area of arts and self-development.

Today, Nicholls is a Lecturer at the Institute of Early Childhood Development at the Macquarie University. However, Nicholls is not an academic in the traditional sense; she combines her experience in culture, arts and drama with early childhood development theory and has developed grassroots community programs with the aim of engaging young people with their local communities including the corporate sector, local government and the civic sector. In her own mind, Nicholls sees herself as a "national social commentator in the role of the arts in the lives of young people and the role of the arts in terms of its capacity to change lives and to build a strong foundation for communities."

In her work, Nicholls believes that young people need to have a sense of community and respect, to have a goal in life and a role in the world, and to be asked what their needs are. Community is the most important context for Nicholls in her work with arts, as addressing community issues at all levels and engaging young people in community building using peer education models are a major interest.

In Australia, there has been a strong movement by government and education departments to value the arts and its role in the cultural lives and heritage of young people. According to Nicholls, her work has experienced a similar growth of "intensity in terms of believing the value that the arts have in the lives of young people;" influenced greatly by her experience in Ecuador as part of the ILG Latin American trip. For Nicholls, to actually see the enormous change in young people's lives because they were involved in the arts, because they were learning new arts related skills, and then going off with very little money into very depressed communities and passing those skills on to other people was truly innovative and inspiring.

Writing about her experience in Latin America for *Lowdown: Youth Performing Arts in Australia*, Nicholls seems to have struck a chord among arts educators and others. "I have received quite a number of phone calls from people who wanted me to talk a little bit more about the work that I had seen. It's probably too early to see what we saw in Ecuador replicated elsewhere, but certainly people picked up the idea from the article . . . ."

Bolaji Owasanoye
Nigeria

The idea of getting young people and adults to work together for mutual benefit was needful and relevant when it was conceived. It remains relevant today and will always be relevant because the young shall grow and the old shall die, but there will never be a time when only one of these is alone in the community. They will always be together.

Bolaji Owasanoye is a cofounder of the Human Development Initiative. This was inspired by his discovery of the true state of youth in Africa through his work with the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. Upon close encounter with the reality of the marginalisation of young people in Nigeria, he and others decided to organize efforts by creating the Human Development Initiative to programme on child rights and other activities. He remains engaged by the constant learning which takes place through his interaction with the young people. "The desire to show that an opportunity to partner with silent contributors throws up interesting information when such contributors are given a voice."

An advocate, lawyer, teacher and researcher, Owasanoye is an activist in a true sense as he combats powerful negative forces within culture and tradition, which insist that young persons have nothing to contribute except their unquestionable obedience and energy which results in youth concerns being treated more in rhetoric. Owasanoye has offered free legal services to poor families and children, and has been working in collaboration with UNICEF on the implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child as youth legislation in Nigeria.

The advent of HIV/AIDS and the debilitating effect that it is having on Nigerian young people has caused Owasanoye to shift the focus his work in a very meaningful way. Presently, he is designing intervention programs on the reproductive health and rights of adolescents, giving empowerment information to school-aged adolescents to supplement the lack of a sexuality education in the curriculum.

Owasanoye speaks of the ILG as an eye opener to the challenges faced by youth all over the world, from which the important lesson was that in addressing the common problems facing youth worldwide, there is no common approach, but rather an approach which takes cognizance of the cultural, social, economic, political, and legal diversities which comprise our world.

When asked to reflect on how the ILG impacted his work, Owasanoye states, "My involvement with the ILG has certainly been beneficial especially in broadening my information and contacts with others on strategies for youth and community development partnerships and the ways by which young people may be engaged. Since the Latin American visit, we have tended to get young people more involved in our project with them either as funded by UNICEF or Ford Foundation. One of the outcomes is that we conducted a needs-reassessment survey with young people on their reproductive health needs."

Clive Willemse
Namibia

Youth development is a process in our context, and we look at it as being about young people having educational development and skill development that enhance leadership.

A community activist, policy advocate, and champion of disadvantaged youth, Clive Willemse is a powerful force in youth and community development in Namibia. Born in a coastal town in Namibia, Willemse grew up under the dominance of neighboring South Africa and its apartheid regime. He is founder of

the Change of Lifestyle Home's Project (COLS) that provides a variety programs and services for young people either at risk of committing or who have already committed criminal offenses. While maintaining a consistent focus on juvenile justice, COLS is engaged in projects on a range of issues — HIV/AIDS, dispute resolution in schools, family and child care, and the like.

Namibia is, in many ways, a challenging context for Willemse's work. With the exception of some universities, youth and community development are not discussed much in Namibia. "The terms are not really used very much," Willemse said, "people just do the work." In addition, he believes the small number of community-based organizations in Namibia may also contribute to the limited use to the term.

Willemse believes the low self-esteem of many people from Namibia's disadvantaged communities presents a serious threat to progress in the country. He sees helping young people believe in themselves as one of his primary missions. "The first thing we need to do is break the negative cycle that is destroying our society, allowing our people to start dreaming, believing in themselves [and] that they now are able to achieve what any person can dream across the globe," Willemse said.

In addition, the HIV/AIDS crisis and post-apartheid transition create other challenges. He says that one in five people are infected with the virus and engaging young people in fighting the disease has moved to the top of his agenda. He also notes that many aparteid-era children and youth laws are still on the books and there has not been a strong enough political movement to create news laws.

Reflecting on his ILG experience, Willemse cited several ways in which the experience has influenced his work. The Latin American trip helped underscore the importance of documentation and research — as much of the best work around the world, including in Namibia, is never shared with organizations engaged in similar work around the world. Willemse was also motivated to step up his efforts to change traditional beliefs that young people should be "seen and not heard," and create more partnerships between youth and adults addressing the country's future. According to Willemse, due to widespread negative perceptions of young people, "What you will find is that youth NGOs are working in isolation, and other adult NGOs are working in isolation." Overcoming this divide has become an important focus of Willemse's work.

But most powerfully, Willemse was struck by the deep sense of social responsibility that ILG members observed during their conversations with young people in Latin America. Returning to his own country, Willemse chose to focus his ILG-sponsored mini-project on developing a similar culture of social responsibility among the young people in Namibia. A series of conferences and meetings have had the desired effect on the youth participants — a greater willingness and commitment to engage is emerging, and volunteer rates at COLS have increased significantly. Willemse is now working to expand this work to encourage social responsibility, currently focused within the capital city, to the entire country.

U.S. MEMBERS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Julia Burgess
Center for Community Change

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Julia Burgess was the Director of Special Initiatives at the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C. Burgess directed the Center's work in organizing around community services and policy change. This included Lifting New Voices, a five-year special demonstration project designed to assist community-based organizations in selected sites to organize and engage increasing numbers of young people in community change, with funding support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Burgess is now an independent consultant.

Della M. Hughes
National Network for Youth

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Della Hughes was the Executive Director of the National Network for Youth, an advocacy and membership organization with 725 direct members and a mission to ensure that young people can be safe and lead healthy and productive lives. She currently is a visiting fellow at The Heller School for Social Policy and Management. The Heller School and the National Network for Youth publish the *CYD Journal*, which is committed to the development of young people and communities, and is supported by the Ford Foundation, Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Kellogg Foundation, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Wallace Funds and Public Welfare Foundation

Frances Lorenzi
Enterprise Foundation

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Frances Lorenzi was a Senior Program Director at the Enterprise Foundation in Columbia, Maryland, where she helped the Foundation expand its community development focus to include youth development by launching a Community Youth Development Initiative piloted in five cities. Ms. Lorenzi is now the Executive Director of the House of Mercy in Baltimore, Maryland.

Richard Murphy
(represented at the Latin America meeting by Raul Ratcliffe)
AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research

Richard Murphy is the Executive Director of the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, which works to strengthen national, state, local and community leaders' capacity to craft public and private policies, programs, and practices standards that are supportive of the country's young people. The Center's Youth Development Mobilization consists of a variety of strategies the Center will implement, both independently and in partnerships, to build youth development infrastructures locally and nationally. Raul Ratcliffe is Program Manager for Community Mapping, where he oversees the Center's work to promote youthmapping as a strategy for youth engagement and community organizing.

Ronald Register
Cleveland Community-Building Initiative

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Ron Register was the Executive Director

of the Cleveland Community-Building Initiative. He was a founding member of the National Community Building Network (NCBN), where he served as the Chairman. NCBN includes a youth track at their annual conference. Register is now an independent consultant working with non-profits and community building organizations in the Cleveland area and around the country.

Gregg Taylor
Community IMPACT! DC
(joined by David Milner, President, Community IMPACT! USA)

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Gregg Taylor was the Executive Director of Community IMPACT! DC, where he managed and directed all aspects of the organization including management systems development, fundraising, communication strategies, strategic planning and neighborhood programming. Community IMPACT! DC trains young people in leadership and community building skills — from public speaking and character education to planning and implementing community building projects — so that they become ambassadors for positive change. The group forms partnerships, establishes an IMPACT! Fund to award neighborhood-based scholarships, and builds an IMPACT! Team of local residents, including youth, to award scholarships to local youth and serve as advisors to Community IMPACT! Gregg Taylor is now Senior Director and Chief Program Officer, DC Initiatives with the Fannie Mae Foundation. David Milner is the founder and President of IMPACT! USA, which is working to establish IMPACT! sites around the country.

Gary Walker
(represented at the Latin American meeting by Corina Chavez)
Public/Private Ventures

Gary Walker is the president of Public/Private Ventures, a national non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the effectiveness of social policies, programs and community initiatives, especially as they affect youth and young adults. P/PV launched the Community Change for Youth Development (CCYD) Initiative at six pilot sites across the United States designed to increase the likelihood of children growing up to be productive adults by increasing basic developmental supports available to them in their communities, funded by the Ford Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Commonwealth Fund, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Merck Family Fund and Charles Hayden Foundation. Corina Chavez, former director of the CCYD site in Austin, Texas, is now with the P/PV office in Oakland, California.

Matthew Wexler
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)

At the time of the Latin America meeting, Matthew Wexler was a Senior Program Officer in charge of developing a new program focused on youth development and recreation. Local Initiatives Support Corporation provides grants, loans and equity investments to CDCs for neighborhood redevelopment. Mr. Wexler is now Senior Manager and Consultant, Community and Development Unit at LISC. LISC's

commitment to supporting youth development continues under the direction of Beverly Smith.

Wendy Wheeler
National 4-H Council

Wendy Wheeler is Director of the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, which was a division of National 4-H Council at the time of the Latin America meeting. It is now a project of the Tides Center, a nonprofit organization that hosts over 300 projects promoting progressive social change. The Innovation Center seeks and promotes bold and creative practices that achieve positive development for youth, communities and society.

REFERENCES

Burke, T. (2000, March). "South American Spirit." *Young People Now.*

The Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US). (2000, Spring). *International Insights,* Volume I. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation. [first appeared in *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development,* (2000, Spring), *1*(2), 46–54]

The Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US). (2000, October). *International Insights,* Volume I. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation. [first appeared in *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development,* (2000, Summer), *1*(3), 54–63]

The Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US). (2000, December). *International Insights,* Volume I. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation. [first appeared in *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development,* (2000, Fall), *1*(4), 54–63]

The Forum for Youth Investment. (2001, Spring). *International Insights,* Volume 1. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation. [first appeared in *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development,* (2001, Winter), *2*(1), 54–62]

The Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US). (1998). *Pathways for Youth and Community Development: A Discussion Paper of the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development.* Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.

The Forum for Youth Investment (then IYF-US). (1999). *Pathways for Youth Participation in Community and Society: Questions and Tools.* Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.

Hughes, D.M., & Curnan, S.P. (2000, Winter). "Community Youth Development: A Framework for Action." *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development, 1*(1), 6-13.

Irby, M., Ferber, T., & Pittman, K., with J. Tolman, & N. Yohalem. (2001). *Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities, Communities Supporting Youth.* Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 6. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.

Mokwena, S. (2000, Winter). "Young People Taking Responsibility for Change in Latin America: Reflecting on the International Learning Group's First Meeting." *CYD Journal: Community Youth Development, 1*(1), 26-31.

Nicholls, J. (2000, February). "Paving Pathways: Youth Development through the Arts — A South American Perspective." *Lowdown: Youth Performing Arts in Australia, 22*(1), 18–19.

Tolman, J., & Pittman. K., with B. Cervone, K. Cushman, L. Rowley, S. Kinkade, J. Phillips, & S. Duque. (2001). *Youth Acts, Community Impacts: Stories of Youth Engagement with Real Results.* Community & Youth Development Series, Volume 7. Takoma Park, MD: The Forum for Youth Investment, International Youth Foundation.

COMMUNITY & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Series

the forum
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

Helping organizations that invest in youth, invest in change

The Forum for Youth Investment is a U.S. initiative of the International Youth Foundation

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: **Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Reflections from the International Learning Group on Youth and Community Development**	
Author(s): Merita Irby (Ed.)	
Corporate Source: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.	Publication Date: 2001, September

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

X

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) *and* paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

☐

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

☐

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

Signature:	Printed Name/Position/Title: Merita Irby, Managing Director
Organization/Address: The Cady-Lee House, 7064 Eastern Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20012	Telephone: 202-207-3333 FAX: 202 207 3329
	E-Mail Address: Merita@forumforyouthinvestment.org Date: 7/31/03

RC023374

(over)

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/CRESS AT AEL
1031 QUARRIER STREET - 8TH FLOOR
P O BOX 1348
CHARLESTON WV 25325

phone: 800/624-9120

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
1100 West Street, 2nd Floor
Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598

Telephone: 301-497-4080
Toll Free: 800-799-3742
FAX: 301-953-0263
e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov
WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)
PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THIS FORM ARE OBSOLETE.